



DR. BRUNO'S WIFE,



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J.C.
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MR. BRUNO'S WIFE.

A TORONTO SOCIETY STORY.

BY

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*author of "A Vain Sacrifice," "Euphie Lyn, or The Fishers of Old
Inweerie," etc. etc.*

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CONTENTS.



PROLOGUE.

CHAP.	PAGE.
I. ONE OF THE DIVIDENDS OF "THE GREAT EUREKA MINE SHARES (LIMITED,)"	11
II. MEDICAL GENTLEMEN AND BENEVOLENT SOCIETY LADIES,	24
III. "HER MOOD WILL NEEDS BE PITIED," ,	29
IV. DR ARBUCKLE GETS A PAYING PATIENT,	25
V. FREDDIE, YOUNG CANADA,	42
VI. "I'M IN LOVE WITH A MAD WOMAN!"	53
VII. WHAT IS IT TO LOVE?	61
VIII. DR ARBUCKLE'S BOLD GAME,	70
IX. NATALIE'S RESOLUTION STRENGTHENED,	80
X. MRS TRANENT'S DETERMINATION,	85
XI. AN OLD SWEETHEART TO THE FORE,	92
XII. DURING COURTSHIP,	101
XIII. "THE LEAST OF THESE, MY BRETHREN,	106
XIV. "FREDDIE PUTS HIS FOOT IN IT,"	113
XV. MRS TRANENT CALLS ON MISS WYNGATE,	122
XVI. NATALIE SEES FOR HERSELF,	130
XVII. AN AWFUL REVELATION,	139
XVIII. "HER WORDS HAD OTHER ISSUE THAN SHE WILLED," .	148

Contents.

CHAP.	PAGE.
XIX.	155
XX. HETTY'S TRUMP CARD FAILS TO WIN,	161
XXI. THE CUP OF COLD WATER WHICH BROUGHT ITS REWARD	171
XXII.	179
XXIII.	185
XXIV. AND LOVE IS LIBERAL AS THE SUMMER AIR	192
XXV. DELIVERANCE,	207
XXVI. AFTERGLOW,	197

Dr Bruno's Wife.

PROLOGUE.

THE whole town was in a panic, the streets all but deserted. Children had been suddenly hustled indoors and locked in, and scared faces were staring apprehensively out of the windows. These saw a few men running wildly hither and thither, with fear in their looks and guns in their hands, ready cocked for firing at something they dreaded, yet looked for at every turn.

At the gate of the Royal Arms, which stood back from the street, and was fronted by a fine carriage entrance, stood two young men, and the unusual sight of the frightened townsmen, thus armed hurrying past, at once roused their curiosity.

"A mad dog!" was the hurried answer to their questions, as the men ran on.

"By Jove!" simultaneously responded both, and turning they were about to enter the gate, when one suddenly uttered a cry of horror and fled into the hotel. The other, a stalwart, dark-eyed youth of eighteen or twenty, turned pale as death; but springing into the middle of the road, and stripping off his coat, he held it by the shoulders outspread before him, and stood with knitted brows and white, set lips, awaiting the onset of

a huge Newfoundland, that with gleaming eyes and frothing jaws came tearing on towards him. As the frantic animal dashed blindly upon him, in a twinkling, by a dexterous movement, he enveloped its head tightly in the coat, and bearing the struggling brute to the earth with sheer strength of wrist, held it down with his knees while desperately clutching its throat.

The contest was frightful; the animal with the strength of madness struggling to be free; the young man, well-nigh beaten at times, but with desperate energy still holding on, with unrelaxing, ever-tightening grip.

For a time the result seemed dubious. Shrieks from the terrified women in the hotel filled the air. Two men armed with pistols, came ostentatiously running down to the rescue, but ere they reached the road the animal was stretched motionless, with the dusty, torn coat still wrapped about its head.

"That was a brave deed," said one of the men.

"We'll make sure he's dead, though," said the other, firing two shots through the coat into the animal's head.

The young man rose slowly, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and walked gravely up to the hotel, where he was surrounded by the proprietor, guests, and servants, all loud in praise of his bravery.

"What will you have, wine or brandy?" asked the proprietor.

"Neither, thank you; but I'll take a glass of water, if you please," replied he, somewhat faintly.

Instantly a pretty barmaid, who, with the others, had crowded to see the hero, darted off and returned with a glass of clear, cool water.

He smiled as he took it from her hand, and said—

"A close call, wasn't it, Hetty?" But she only smiled wanly.

"It was brave! grand! wonderful!" chorused the crowd.

"I beg to differ with you people. I think I must have been as mad as the poor dog. It was the instinct of self-preservation. I couldn't help myself—it was madness to attempt it. However, now it's over, I'm really glad the poor brute's out of his trouble."

So said the young man, his strength and colour coming back to him, and with a smile he ran upstairs to his room to remove the dust from his hands and face.

Thither he was followed by his companion.

"I say, old fellow, you are a brick!" cried he, administering a tremendous clap on the shoulder.

"Nonsense—I tell you it was a foolish thing to do; I wouldn't do it again. Where were you?"

"I! I never halted till I got safe in doors. I thought sure you were behind me. I'm a kind of ashamed of myself now."

"Well, you needn't. You were the more sensible of the two. It's no shame to run from a mad dog."

"Did you see how the pretty barmaid smiled on you when she gave you the water? I thought she was going to faint when she saw you first on top of the dog. I believe that girl is getting fond of you, Ned."

"Nonsense! Why, you flirt with her more than I do, I'm sure."

"Maybe so; that isn't the point. The fact is, Ned, that girl is getting downright daft about you."

Ned Arbuckle was lathering his hands and wrists with soap while his friend talked, and for a moment or two

he did not speak. He looked grave and thoughtful.

"I'd be mighty sorry if that was the case, for I'm sure I meant nothing but a little pleasant banter to, while away the hours occasionally. Hetty is nice enough looking and all that; but though she is but a barmaid, I wouldn't like to hurt her feelings in any way, I'm sure. But, pshaw! Frank—it's all nonsense."

"It's all fact, I tell you," persisted his companion.

"Well, then, it's got to be stopped, that's all. I'll be more careful for the future. Anyhow it is a little shabby of fellows to take advantage of a pretty girl's inferior situation to make love we do not feel, eh? And, of course, neither of us is going to marry a barmaid."

"No—hardly," was the prompt reply.

The two young men were students, college friends, who were spending their holidays in this picturesque little sea-bathing resort on the Clyde. On first becoming acquainted these two had found their circumstances to be singularly alike, both being orphans, having neither sister nor brother. Both were of respectable parentage, knew they must make each his own way in the world, having no more cash than would see them comfortably through college.

Ned Arbuckle was slightly the better off, having literary abilities which found scope in occasional letters and articles to magazines, for which he was paid a fair price. His *nom-de-guerre*, X.Y.Z., had come to signify £ s. d. The unusual lack of home friends and relations had drawn the young men all the more closely together, and this summer Ned Arbuckle, having netted considerably more than he had anticipated

from his ready pen, insisted on spending it on a pleasant holiday in this sea-washed town, he bearing all the expense. The protests of his friend were pooh-poohed away by the statement that he could soon grind out plenty more. His pen was like the magical mill which made tripe of sea salt; he had only to say—"Pen, pen, grind away; grind some cash for me, I pray," and straightway it would begin and scratch, scratch, scratch to the extent of from one to five gold guineas or so. Money, he declared, burnt a hole in his pocket, and the inward satisfaction he felt in having his friend with him here, boarding at the hotel, made him feel he was the one to be most thankful. Perhaps it was this feeling which had that morning prompted him to buy a pretty, inexpensive little ring to bestow on Hetty, the handsome barmaid, with whom he had flirted very pleasantly for the past six weeks. It was in his pocket, but he did not like the idea of it now quite so well as he did when he had bought it a few hours back. True, he had done a little flirting, but so had Ramsay, his friend, and all the other good-looking fellows who occasionally lounged into the bar. They all admired Hetty. She had a pretty face, fine complexion, dark brown hair, sharp blue eyes, and a tall, slim, lissome figure to boot. But that she should have singled *him* out of all the crowd of her admirers as the one particular object of her regard was annoying. However—it would soon be over now—she should have the little keepsake since he had bought it, and to-morrow—to-morrow he should be gone, never to come back or see her face again. What harm?

He got a fine opportunity for saying good-bye, and presenting his souvenir. The evening was soft and

clear, and the proprietor, who was a bachelor, with the boarders, had gone out for a quiet stroll, or a game of golf along the links, leaving the house to the care of the housekeeper and Hetty.

"Well, Hetty, at that novel yet?" said Ned, as he entered the bar, and caught her surreptitiously reading an old, worn novel.

"I'm just near the end now ; I'll finish it before I sleep to-night," replied Hetty with a sudden blush. Ned Arbuckle had always been a marked favourite with her, but the day's adventure with the dog had deepened the impression he had made on her not very sensitive heart, and the barmaid was now as thoroughly in love with Ned Arbuckle as she was ever likely to be with any man.

"I just ran in to say good-bye to you, Hetty. I'll be up and away before you are awake to-morrow morning."

Hetty closed the ragged book quietly, but she had suddenly turned pale.

"Oh! so soon?"

"Yes, my girlie ; but I don't want you to quite forget this pleasant summer, so I brought you a little *souvenir*—that means a keepsake, you know"—and Ned, who had not failed to note how pale the peachy cheeks had grown, began to fumble in all his pockets at once for the little box with the ring in it. He was getting somewhat hot, and wishing it were well over.

"Here she am!" he exclaimed, gaily, using bad grammar to cover any sign of confusion. "Hold your finger, Hetty—there, when you're an old married woman, with a flock of piccaninnies about you, look at that ring, and heave a sigh for yours truly."

"It's a beautiful ring, and I'll wear it for your sake,

but what kind of stone is that? I must come out to the light." Did she want to see the stone better? or was it only the *ruse* of a coquette to get close up beside the giver of the ring? who can tell? Any way, she came outside the bar, and holding it up, admired and praised it. But the colour came not back to her cheeks, and there was a tender tremor of feeling in her voice when she spoke that touched the youth of nineteen.

Ramsay was right—the poor girl *was* smitten; he would be a fool indeed not to see that, or the expression of sadness and disappointment she tried to veil with smile and chatter.

"Well, I must be off. Good-bye, Hetty."

"Good-bye, Mr Arbuckle, and thank you," she said, almost inaudibly, and Ned, thankful that it was over, bounded out upon the lawn. He was but nineteen, remember, so it is without a blush for him that we record the fact that, despite his thankfulness, there arose in his throat a lump that he had some difficulty in swallowing.

"Good gracious! what am I to do?" he suddenly exclaimed, for he had just discovered that he had left his pocket-book on the bar counter. He could not proceed a step farther without it; all the cash he possessed in the world was in it, having drawn it to be ready for his journey next morning. He hesitated a moment, then made a desperate rush back again, and leaped into the bar through the open window.

The pocket-book was lying on the counter where he had left it. At once he seized it, and was about to vanish by the way he came, when the sight of Hetty cowered up, with her face buried in her hands and sobbing bitterly, arrested him.

"Why, Hetty! what's the matter, my girly?" he said, touched by her genuine grief.

But Hetty only sobbed the harder.

"Come, girly, don't take on so, don't be foolish. We must all part some day or other," he murmured, in a half-hearted kind of way.

"Oh, I cannot help it—I cannot," she sobbed, rising and drying her eyes; "I never cared before who came or went, it was always the same, but you're so different someway. I—" and here she broke down and wept again—this time on his shoulder. For his heart was young and tender, and remorse for his thoughtlessness constrained him to put his arm about her waist. Then, to console the poor thing, he took her pretty dimpled chin between his finger and thumb, and kissed her quivering ruby lips.

That night the moon rose full and glorious, and Arbuckle and Ramsay lay talking before they went to sleep—Ned describing to his friend the bad quarter of an hour he had parting with the barmaid.

"And don't you go flirting with her after I'm gone, Ramsay, or maybe she'll fall in love with you too," he wound up with late wisdom.

"No danger. Where shall I write to you?"

"Oh, to *Poste-restante*, Melbourne; but I'll write to you to Edinburgh—to be called for—from Port Said. I think I'll get ashore there for a few weeks. Well, good night, old fellow; I won't wake you in the morning. Take care of yourself till I come back."

"Good-nigh, and good luck, Ned. *Bon voyage!*"

And they each turned over and went to sleep, little dreaming that this was an eternal farewell.

Hetty, in her little bed in the servants' attic, lay tossing sleeplessly. "He loves me, he must have loved me, or how would he have given me such a beautiful ring? He loves me, and I'll maybe never see him again, and all because I'm a poor servant in a hotel—a bar-maid. Oh, if I were only rich! if somebody would die and leave me a fortune. Ah, wouldn't I be happy—for I would give him it all, and we could be married," and so on, and so on, after the manner of girls, sighed poor Hetty to the moon, shining so grandly down upon the sea. Then she turned her face to the wall, and tried to sleep, in vain. "He loves me; surely he never would have kissed me if he didn't love me," she kept whispering to herself, till in her restlessness she rose and stood looking out at the window.

"He gave me a keepsake, and I've nothing I can give him in return. Oh! what can I give him?" she whispered desperately, and then like a flash she remembered a little silver pencil-holder which she had found on the bar floor two years ago, and for which no owner had ever turned up. She would give him that. Yes, she would slip down now, when the house was all asleep. She would open the young men's door, softly, and slip in and lay it on the toilet-table before the glass, where he could not miss seeing it. But what if she was caught? The thought made her gasp with terror, and she put her hand on her heart. But no! she should *not* be caught. She lit her candle, took out a bit of note-paper out of the drawer, and writing upon it the words, "*When this you see remember me,*" she wrapped the pencil-case in it, addressed it to Mr Edward Arbuckle, and slipping on a wrapper, came softly downstairs to

No. 13. At the door she stood listening, but hearing no sound, she turned the handle softly, and peeped cautiously in. The window blind was up, and the moon shone full upon the bed, and upon the two young men who lay calmly asleep. Hetty paused a moment, and then with bare feet tiptoed noiselessly over the carpet to the toilet-table, and laid the pencil-case down in front of the glass, and as silently retreated. She was about to shut the door when a sudden flap of the bed clothes made her flee to the far end of the corridor, where, in a recess, she stood panting and pressing her hand hard over her heart. As she craned her neck to listen, she fancied she heard sounds as of someone in distress, and losing her fear of being caught in the greater dread of her lover being ill, she again tiptoed up to the door, and looking in, grew speechless, struck dumb with mortal fear. It was a full hour before she returned to her little bed in the attic, and though it was a soft, summer night, her teeth chattered in her head. She shivered and shook as in a fit of ague, the very blood in her young veins ran cold with horror. She dressed herself with trembling hands, and, thinking her senses had surely deceived her, she glided fearfully down again and looked in. The two were now lying quietly on the bed—Ramsay back in the shade; Arbuckle's face turned to the light; sleeping calmly.

CHAPTER I.

ONE OF THE DIVIDENDS OF "THE GREAT EUREKA MINE
SHARES (LIMITED.)"

ONE of the prettiest little residences on East Avenue, Toronto, Canada, was occupied by Mrs Colonel Wyngate and her only daughter, a young lady of nineteen.

Mrs Wyngate was a *petite* elderly lady, a faded beauty, with a certain haughty dignity of manner, which compelled attention and was considered proof of high breeding. She had moved in a select society circle in the old land, but after the death of Colonel Wyngate, her consequent inability to entertain as formerly had constrained well-informed friends to advise her to remove to Canada; where, they were told, a lady with a limited income could live without any appreciable difference of the style to which she had been accustomed, and without running the humbling risk of being considered a poor relation.

No doubt Mrs Wyngate's relations were entirely sincere in their anxiety to ship her off to Canada. Their consciences were also at rest as to her future, for it was known that the late Colonel had left sufficient, with prudent management, to provide not only a comfortable living, but also a certain amount of quiet, aristocratic style.

Unfortunately, however, as Mrs Wyngate's friends probably foresaw, prudent management was out of the question, for the widow knew no more of the management of finance than a baby. To precipitate ill fortune, she in an evil hour had become acquainted with the Rev. Dr. Bruno, rector of a popular ladies' seminary, with whom she had placed her daughter some years ago on coming to the country. The reverend doctor was a fine, bland, gentlemanly man, of suave manner, and somewhat stately presence. Not quite stately nor quite fine, but something suddenly stopping short of that, a man whom you at first sight distrusted, but who made you reproach yourself for it afterwards. Two years ago he had taken a run down to Colorado, and had returned thence the full-fledged and properly authorised agent of "The Great Eureka Mine," a wonderful find of silver ore which needed only capital to work it and make it an unparalleled success.

Now, the good Doctor was neither an ill-meaning man nor a villain; he was simply a man unable to refrain from dabbling in concerns about which he knew not enough. And, if the whole truth must be told, he was rather luxuriously inclined, was fond of popularity, and, besides, had on hand several pet educational and other schemes which he found he could not carry out without that power and influence which comes only through the possession of ample funds.

To do him justice, he had been extremely cautious in his acceptance of this agency. Not satisfied with black upon white proofs that this was a *bona fide* concern, he at his own expense took a trip to Colorado in order to make sure, and had been made as certain as the most

sumptuous American dinners could make him. He had even visited the mine *in propria personâ*, and what more could he do?

Of course he had to consider also that his profession as a minister of the denomination to which he belonged demanded nothing less than a renunciation of everything connected with mammon or money-making pure and simple; above all, speculation. But then the Doctor was a man of broad views, and held that denominational tests, though sworn to in good faith at the time of induction, were to be interpreted, not literally but liberally, even as certain scriptural maxims were interpreted in the spirit, not the letter of the text. For himself, he could declare that no one who knew him could say that he loved money for its own sake.

Not he. Dr Bruno felt that he could look the whole world in the face and defy it to say that he loved money as money. If he did undertake to float this very promising concern, it would only be because he saw in it abundant opportunities of doing good, of ultimately carrying out his schemes, and of finally proving to a sceptical age that it is possible to make the best of both worlds.

One grand characteristic of Dr Bruno was that he never did things by halves. He was naturally of a sanguine speculative disposition, seeing the end of things clearly from the beginning, and allowing no possible contingency to arise and eclipse that view. He not only saw it himself, but he had the singular faculty of making others see it too, as distinctly as one sees a distant mountain top against the golden glow of sunset. His position and character afforded him every

advantage; people could entrust their money where they had so successfully entrusted their daughters, and as soon as the delicately tinted, artistically got up prospectuses were scattered abroad, money flowed in, and the shares went off like hot cakes.

Mrs Wyngate thought it a charming idea; exceedingly good of the Doctor to mention the matter to her; for although they had funds sufficient, still a little addition would not be undesirable. Accordingly she at once proposed to invest half her funds in "The Great Eureka Mine" Shares (Limited); but when the genial Doctor, with a happy smile of entire confidence, exclaimed—

"My dear Mrs Wyngate, if it is good for half, how much better for the whole; think of the dividends!" the lady at once assented, with a—"Why, of course, Doctor! certainly!" and ventured her all.

The reverend gentleman's enthusiasm was infectious; there was no resisting it or him, and Mrs Wyngate kept back barely enough for a year's necessities. No need for more, since the dividends would be in so soon.

But the year had slipped by, and a few months besides, and still no dividends. They were living in an expensively furnished house, paid for in advance, and rented for a year to come, but first one and then the other servant had to go.

At last their impecuniosity could no longer be concealed. Mrs Wyngate had sent for Dr Bruno, but he was away at Long Branch, and not at home even when there, so while the dividends lingered the bills steadily grew. Natalie, answering the door now to the grocer, butcher, and baker, was of too transparent a nature not

to betray in her face the doubts she felt as to the ultimate payment of those bills they daily asked payment of; and they, taking fright and smarting from past experience, concluded to stop supplies until some cash should be forthcoming.

^{days} To make matters worse for Natalie, she had, a few days ago, in the street cars, heard Dr Bruno denounced in no measured terms by two business-like men sitting opposite her. Their words had struck her with mortal fear; with an overwhelming certainty that they were ruined, left utterly penniless. As a girl at his school she had taken an unaccountable dislike to the kind Doctor, a dislike Mrs Wyngate had frequently scolded her for. With a palpitating heart she had answered the bell this forenoon, and returned to the parlour trembling.

"The butcher is at the door, mamma."

"Oh! Tell him to send up a small leg of lamb, with mint, some green peas, and some onions."

"But, mamma, he has come with this bill, and he says he can send no more meat until it is paid."

"Well then. Ah, let me see, how much is it? Fifteen dollars and sixty cents. Oh, well, tell him I'll call and settle in a few days. I must write to Dr Bruno about these shares. He puts me off, and puts me off, but I *must* have money now."

"And here is the baker, too; they both came together. The baker is very angry, and is standing in the kitchen waiting for his money."

"The insolence of those tradespeople! They are positively insufferable. Go this instant, Natalie, and tell them they will both be paid in a few days."

Natalie stood, hesitating; the slow blood mounting to

her pale, *spirituel* face ; her soft dark eyes heavy and troubled.

"What are you waiting for, child?"

"Oh, mamma! I don't like to go and tell them that; they are so rough and rude these men."

"Well, Natalie, whose fault was it? You would insist on dispensing with the servant—now you must take the consequences." And the lady, the little, thin, faded beauty, the erstwhile belle of Calcutta, drew a wrap about her and sat down to her desk to write, while her daughter, with slow, unwilling steps, went down into the kitchen.

"By the way, what shall we have then for dinner, Natalie? I feel as if I could take a cup of coffee now. Do get me a cup; there's a dear," said Mrs Wyngate, when Natalie, with tear-swollen eyes, re-entered the room.

"There is no coffee, mamma!" was the meek answer.

"No coffee! What is the reason of that? No coffee!"

"The grocer has not sent what you ordered on Monday, and this is Thursday."

"And there is no wine either?"

Natalie shook her head sadly.

"I must say you are very careless, Natalie. When you undertook to do the servant's duties last week, I certainly expected you would have looked after things better. You ought to have ordered in a fresh supply long before the other was done."

"I did, mamma. I told you, and you ordered them, but they have not come," said Natalie, in a vexed tone.

"Well, well, it can't be helped. I have written to Dr Bruno for some money at once. Meantime, see if you

can't get just half a glass of wine out of the bottles—I do feel so faint.”

Mrs Wyngate really looked faint, but not more so than her daughter, who went as she was bidden.

“There isn't any, mamma—not a drop. You got the last yesterday afternoon. There is some tea, but there is no sugar, nor any bread or butter.”

Mrs Wyngate turned and leant her head upon her delicate white hand.

“It is a shame, a positive shame!” she exclaimed, the hot tears rising and filling her eyes. “I can't think why Dr Bruno should treat me so. He promised that we should have dividends from the mine in less than a year, and yet there isn't a penny. This letter, however, will bring me something, for there is no doubt he is a gentleman.”

Natalie said nothing for a few minutes, but presently she rose and stood behind her mother, her tall, slight figure towering over the *petite* form in the chair.

“Mamma, dear mamma, don't trust to Dr Bruno or anyone. I am afraid you will never see any of your money again. When I was coming up in the street car the other day, I heard two gentlemen discussing him in a most unfavourable manner, one of them threatening all sorts of vengeance on him for well-nigh ruining him.”

As she said this, she gradually stooped and laid her arms caressingly about her mother's neck.

“Natalie Wyngate! how can you give ear to unworthy aspersions on the character of such a gentleman as Dr Bruno. He is one, when he takes in hand to do a thing for you, will do it thoroughly; but you must give him entire control, and very properly, too. When

I proposed putting half our little fortune in the 'Great Eureka Mine Shares,' he said to me—"My dear Mrs Wyngate, either go all, or not at all. It would not be worth while negotiating unless with a handsome sum; and besides, the faster the shares are bought up, the more quotations rise." He told me that himself, and why should I doubt the word of a gentleman? But I wish I had kept a little, just a little to keep us comfortable until the dividends had been declared."

"There never will be any dividends, mamma. Oh, mamma, dear mamma, do consent to let me teach music or painting or something whereby I can earn a little. I—"

"Silence, Natalie. Don't dare to mention such a thing in my hearing again. What! Colonel Wyngate's daughter teaching music—hired by those vulgar tradespeople to teach their brats—never! We will die first;" and Mrs Wyngate stamped her foot at the idea.

"But, mamma, work is honourable. And I like music, and I should like to teach—and—"

"Silence, I say! Let me hear no more of it. I forbid you ever to mention such a proposition in my hearing. I will go and lie down a little while you mail that letter."

"Have you three cents for a stamp?" asked Natalie, faintly.

"Look in my portmonnaie and see."

"There is nothing here, mamma."

"Then the letter will have to wait; we can post it tomorrow."

As the lady lay down on a lounge, Natalie covered her up, and with a hopeless sigh left the room.

For the next three days Mrs Wyngate and her daughter ate but one meal a day, and that was made of the scraps which they found in the pantry—crusts of bread, morsels of cold meat, which had been scraped into a dish to be given to the charwoman for her chickens, &c. But the fourth day dawned and there was nothing whatever in the house to eat. Mrs Wyngate attempted to get up on the morning of the second day, but staggered and fell forward on the floor. Natalie proposed getting a doctor, but her mother emphatically said “No;” there would certainly be a letter from Dr Bruno before long, and then everything would go right. These things of course took time to mature, and the Doctor was *such* a gentleman. Sure enough, the letter from Dr Bruno came that very day: and Natalie, espying the carrier, slipped softly to the door and took the letter from his hand, lest his ring should awake her mother, who slept. Doubtful, eager for news, Natalie opened the letter. Dr Bruno regretted to inform Mrs Wyngate that it would be at least two years more before dividends could be realised; all that was wanted at the present exigency was more money to make the thing an immense success. There were millions in it when once set agoing. In the meantime it was necessary to purchase new machinery, and this machinery would cost nearly all that they had on hand. However, shares were still going up, and in great demand, and by and by they would realize, &c., &c. Natalie did not show her mother this letter. Though Mrs Wyngate had professed to disbelieve what her daughter overheard in the street car, nevertheless it had troubled her so that she had slept very little since.

She had become more fretful and impatient than ever

before, but want of food alone was sufficient to cause that, thought the daughter, with filial charity. To-day, however, there had crept over her mother's face a queer grey look which alarmed Natalie, and aroused her failing courage. In desperation, and with a nameless fear at her heart, she slipped on her hat and cloak and went to the grocer's and asked for a little wine, which she promised to pay with the rest of the bill very soon.

The grocer shook his head and said he couldn't do it.

Then she tried the butcher for a pound of steak, but he also promptly refused, and sick at heart she turned home again. As she stopped to open the gate, she saw, a couple of feet up by the wall, a small biscuit, evidently dropped by some child, and at that moment it was to her as manna from heaven. It would be a little for her mother till she should get her something else. She glanced stealthily around to see if anyone was looking out of the windows opposite, and then she stepped up and lifted it as though it had been something she herself had dropped, and walked jauntily into the house with it.

"Mamma! mamma, dear! are you awake? See, darling, here is a nice little biscuit for you."

Mrs Wyngate stirred uneasily, murmuring—

"No doubt, Dr Bruno is a—gent—le—man;" and almost immediately fell asleep again. The girl sighed, laid the biscuit down, and turned away. Towards evening, Natalie, her white lips showing below the black gauze veil which was tied across her face, stepped timorously into a pawnbroker's shop on York Street. She had read of pawning articles for money, and she knew that three golden balls *always* indicated a pawnshop.

As she passed in, a bloated-looking man, unwashed and unshaven, turned round and stared at her, his beery breath sickening her.

"Now, then, vat you vants, young oomans?" demanded the pawnbroker, who was a great fat German Jew.

Natalie glanced timidly at the man, and then producing a gold ring set with an opal and pearls, asked if he would buy it.

"Ve not py sooch dings, ve shoost pledge dem."

"Then I will pledge it. What will you give for it?"

"Shoost let me see der ring, vill you? Ah! vere a young ooman like you get sooch a ring?" demanded Solomon, examining the ring.

"It is my own, my father gave it to me," replied Natalie, trembling.

"Your fader, hey? Dat is all fery vell, young oomans. Put der boliceman come to me and say—'Vere dat young oomans mit der ring?' I say—'Vat ring?' 'Der ring she stole,' he say, and off he vill valk mit der ring; and den, vere is mine monish?"

"I don't understand what you mean, sir, but will you take the ring?" faltered Natalie, growing faint.

"Give the poor girl a chance, you gol—darned Hebrew son of a gun," roared the tipsy but sympathetic unwashed, who, full of whisky and pity, had been looking on. "Come on, my girl, I'll take you to a place where you'll get your ring sold, and no questions asked. Come along," continued he, with maudlin kindness, trying to slip his arm about her waist; but Natalie, with a muffled shriek of terror, broke away from him and fled into the street, leaving the ring with the Jew, who quietly dropped it into his box.

It was dusk when, faint and despairing, she arrived home and entered the house. As she opened the door she paused a moment, for just then, with a thrill of joy, she remembered a small can of oat meal which had been purchased some time ago to make gruel for the servant when she was ill. To think she should have forgotten such a treasure trove when searching the pantry! She could make a little gruel of that with salt. Thank God, they had salt at least, if not sugar, and elated with hope she entered. That gruel would preserve life in them till to-morrow, and to-morrow she would go and get work somewhere and somehow.

"Are you asleep, mamma?" she breathed softly, as she entered the bedroom. There was no answer. She tiptoed over the bedside and listened. There was no sound of breathing. She laid her hand caressingly on her mother's cheek—it was cold—marble cold!

A nameless dread stilled her pulses and held her mute, while she scratched a match and lit the coloured wax taper that stood in its candle-stick on the table, and again bent over the still form in the bed.

"Mamma! mamma! speak to me, mamma!" she cried, her voice dying away in a long, heart-broken wail.

A bat, which had flown in through the open window in the darkness, now in the dim taper light began to wheel, phantom-like, round and round the bed, the room, full of strange shadows, began to revolve, something dashed blindly against her face, and with a long, shivering shriek, Natalie fell back upon the floor.

Some three days after this a wild rumour thrilled the city—a rumour of a lady and her daughter, living in one

of the most fashionable streets, having been found—the one dead, and the other dying of sheer starvation. The lady, it is said, had lost all her money by speculation; and too proud to make her wants known, had chosen rather to die.

The daughter, a beautiful young girl, had been removed to the General Hospital, in a dying condition, and had been placed in a private ward at the expense of the Ladies' Benevolent Society.

This was but one of the dividends of "The Great Eureka Mine Shares (Limited.)"

CHAPTER II.

MEDICAL GENTLEMEN AND BENEVOLENT SOCIETY LADIES.

THE medical fraternity was plentifully and variously represented in the city of Toronto. There were the elderly and well-to-do in the profession, who lived in palace villas, objected to going out in the night time, charged two and three dollars a visit, and swore to their yearly assessable income as below two thousand dollars. Then there were those who were just struggling to get a footing on the ladder; who in order to make believe that they were almost run to death by patients clamouring for their special services, registered themselves as the yearly recipients of double the income of the old doctors, and were assessed accordingly. Then there were the newly-fledged medicos-patient; despairing souls—each of whom had recently hung out a modest sign by the door bell, announcing the hours when they could be consulted, as if they were quite too busy to be seen at any other time. These sat hour after hour in their modest parlour-surgeries for weeks, ay, and months together, with rent overdue, debts accumulating, and duns blandly being met with promises; wishing to goodness some accident would occur providentially in front of their doors, or some woman be brought to bed in a hurry, or that something would happen, no matter what, so long as it but brought them “a case.”

To this latter class belonged Dr Arbuckle. He had graduated with honours, had written several clever articles on nervous and brain diseases to the *Canadian Lancet*, and had, not far from another doctor's residence in a central part of the city, rented a house, on the outside of the door of which he had caused to be fastened a brass plate, with Edward Arbuckle, M.D., engraved on it. The Doctor was a tall, fine-looking fellow of thirty at least; with manly features, strong, firm chin, eyes that were honest-looking and clear, and though of a thoughtful turn, quite as far from moroseness as he was from flippancy.

Like other young doctors who had no elderly friend in the profession to extend to them the right hand of partnership, and so ensure present and future patronage, he found he would have to bide his time; but the interval he whiled away, not by reading novels, or "working the Joss house," as cultivating the good graces of the different denominations was called, but by reading and acquiring all the knowledge he could possibly get on his favourite studies, and by writing articles containing his own ideas thereon. Instead of patriotically giving these ideas gratis to the papers of his own country, he sent them off to the States, receiving cash in return—cash which he threw as sops to the Cerberus of debt which had begun to bark at him.

He was also a lover of music and had for some time back cultivated violin practice.

A good deal of his time he also gave to the Hospital, which was a reciprocal advantage. It was when returning from it one day that he became unconsciously the subject of conversation between two ladies who were

walking a little behind him in the same direction. They were both fine-looking and stylishly dressed ladies, neighbours and residents on University Avenue, the finest street in the city.

"I wonder who is that fine-looking fellow in front of us? Do you know him?" said Mrs Tranent, the best-looking of the two—a woman with erect figure, full-bosomed and flaxen-haired, carrying herself with a grace that had something defiant in it.

"No—unless it be the doctor who has just come to live here. Yes—it is, he ; see, he is going in now," answered the other.

Dr Arbuckle ran up the steps and shut the door smartly behind him, all unaware of this feminine observation.

Mrs Tranent looked at the door-plate after he had gone in, and then suddenly stopped, turned, and looked again.

"Arbuckle is the name, isn't it?" asked the placid-looking lady, as Mrs Tranent resumed her walk by her side. Mrs Tranent did not at once reply. She paced musingly on for a few steps, and then recollecting herself said—

"I beg your pardon, Mrs Rutherford?"

"I was saying that I thought Arbuckle was the name," repeated Mrs Rutherford, benignly.

"Yes, that is the name on the door-plate. Is he—ah—does he belong to the city?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. All I do know is that I heard Mr Rutherford saying that Dr Caxton had got a rival opposite."

"Ah, he is certainly a fine-looking man—if that is he."

The blonde lady was very quiet during the rest of her walk ; but at last they reached their destination, which was the vestry of a handsome Methodist Church, which adorned and lent a dignity to an otherwise so-so street. They were two of a large and influential society of ladies who met once a week to transact Church business, arrange socials, receive and consider applications on behalf of poor and needy worshippers, and all other such laudable work. The support of the poor in Canada being as yet on a purely Christian basis, the word pauper being unknown, ladies of leisure and benevolence generally find plenty to do. However, there was a certain pleasure in the work, for besides the luxury of alleviating poverty and giving pleasure, there was also a social side to the arrangement which made it both pleasant and profitable.

“Have you heard how poor Miss Wyngate is getting on?” asked one of the ladies.

“She is getting better, but her reason is entirely gone. It is very sad, she is such a lovely girl,” replied Mrs Rutherford.

“This young Dr Arbuckle takes quite an interest in the case, I hear. He won’t hear of her being taken to the Asylum yet at least, and he thinks the company of the nurses and their cheerful talk will be better for her in the meantime. He makes nervous and brain diseases his study, and I am inclined to think he will bring her all right yet. Only think—she kissed and cuddled the flowers I took her up the other day.”

“You must take me to see her some day, Mrs Rutherford,” said Mrs Tranent quietly. “I feel so sorry for her, poor thing! Has Dr Arbuckle much of a practice do you know?”

"No—I don't think so. Of course he's only beginning yet, and it's a steep pull at first."

"Then we must give him a lift somehow. Next time I am sick I shall send for him, and if I like him I shall soon have him into a good practice. A doctor who understands nervous women is badly wanted, I think," said Mrs Tranent, with her charming, all-compelling smile.

Mrs Rutherford gravely assented, but one or two of the ladies smiled quietly, for Mrs Tranent was a beautiful blonde widow in her prime, and Dr Arbuckle was a clever, handsome man, also in his prime. *Ergo*—what more natural than that—?

CHAPTER III.

"HER MOOD WILL NEEDS BE PITIED."

"**S**HALL we go in and have a look at Miss Wyngate now?" asked Dr Arbuckle of the amiable and capable head-nurse, Miss Stobie, as he met her coming out of one of the wards.

"If you like, Doctor. Have you time this morning?"

"Plenty of time, and plenty of will, Miss Stobie. I am very much interested in this case. What do you think? Is she improving?"

Miss Stobie shook her head sadly.

"It's a sad, sad case, Doctor; she looks at me so wistfully, so earnestly, with those great, dark melancholy eyes of hers that it makes me feel like crying sometimes; and you know, Doctor, how unlike me that is. I think it is her extreme beauty and gentleness touches me so, and then to think what she must have suffered to bring her to that."

The Doctor listened thoughtfully, with bowed head.

"We must do our level best for her, Miss Stobie; I am going to make this case a special study," said the Doctor. "I have a strong hope we will bring her all right yet, and I hope she won't be sent to the Asylum until we have given her up entirely."

"I'll see she stays till then," said the nurse nodding confidentially, and they both passed into the ward.

Natalie Wyngate was sitting in an easy chair, looking out of the window, with her fingers moving restlessly in her lap. She did not turn or look at the Doctor and Miss Stobie as they entered.

"Well, Miss Wyngate, how are you to-day?—better, eh?"

Natalie turned her eyes full on the Doctor, and laughed a low childish laugh.

The Doctor took from the depths of his great coat pocket a pretty, fluffy white kitten, and laid it in her lap. She felt the warm creature nozzling under her hands, and she looked at it wonderingly, and laid her thin transparent fingers softly down on its warm fur, and smiled.

"Pretty kitty—isn't it?" said Miss Stobbie.

"Pretty kitty," she murmured, stroking it softly, and looking at it still with wonder.

"Who brought it?" she asked, suddenly and without looking up.

The Doctor's eye flashed. It was more than he had expected this.

"I brought it for you," said he, dropping on one knee before her in order to catch her eye.

"What is its name?" she again asked.

"What shall we call it, Miss Stobie? help me. What shall we call the kitten?"

Miss Stobie smiled. "Call it Natalie or Nattie—her own name."

"Yes that will do. This is Natalie," he said, stroking the kitten with one hand, and holding one of her thin wrists in the other, counting her pulse.

As he pronounced the word Natalie, she started, half

raised herself out of the chair, and cried "Yes, mamma—I am coming!" and sank down again, trembling like a leaf.

"Ah! that was unfortunate," murmured the Doctor, we will have to call it something else. "Kitty, kitty, nice kitty. You love kitty—poor little kitty!" said the Doctor, trying to get her to notice the animal.

Her head was bent over the cat, but while he regarded her with eager, steadfast look, she suddenly lifted her dark beautiful eyes and looked at him calmly. Her gaze seemed to rivet his, he smiled, she smiled; then laying her hand softly on his cheek, she said—"I love *you*!"

The Doctor rose to his feet with a laugh, in which Miss Stobie joined; but the blood had surged into his neck, his face, his head, and ebbing slowly, left him paler than his wont.

"By Jove! she had the best of it there, hadn't she?" he laughed. "However, I'd let her keep the kitten in her own ward here, and see what effect the care of a living thing will have upon her. Rather hard on a fellow that sort of thing though," he concluded, as another flush at the recollection of it again rose to his brow.

"Poor thing, if making love to you, Doctor, will but bring her round, why not let her. She'll soon quit," said Miss Stobie, as together they left the ward—to the care of a nurse.

"We'll see what interest she'll take in the cat," said the Doctor. "Did you observe the connection of ideas when she asked who brought it?"

"Yes, it looked hopeful. It is the first connected idea I have seen her express since she came. I do trust you may be able to help her, Doctor."

"She is a frail plant just now. However, it is not the madness of hereditary disease, it is simply the result of an overstrain on a fine sensitive organism. Nature, unable to bear the burden, has cast it from her and taken refuge in temporary oblivion. By and by, when she has recuperated, the reasoning faculties will resume their sway, and she will be all right again. Who knows?—perhaps this is the most merciful way of coming back again to the world she had so nearly left. It was a heartrending affair."

Just then a lady of stately appearance and fair countenance came stepping softly along the corridor where Miss Stobie and Dr Arbuckle stood talking.

"How is Miss Wyngate to-day, Miss Stobie?" she inquired, graciously. As she spoke, Dr Arbuckle looked at her sharply, then, raising his hat, passed on to the other wards.

"She is much the same as usual," replied the nurse, in a professional tone. The blonde lady produced a card.

The nurse took the card and saw on it, "*Mrs Tranent, The Larches*," and, with a comprehensive glance at the lady, said, "Certainly," and led the way to the private ward. For Mrs Tranent of The Larches was one of the 'Toronto Ladies Benevolent Society,' and this was visiting day at the hospital.

Natalie was still sitting in her chair, but she had taken the furry little pet in her arms and was cuddling it close into her neck, humming to it some low monotonous refrain.

"She seems very quiet and sensible like," remarked Mrs Tranent, who stood looking at her as she might have looked at any singular phenomenon.

"Yes, she is very quiet," responded Miss Stobie, briefly.

"Does she never talk? Let's see if she will talk to me. How do you do, my dear?"

Natalie continued to hum to the kitten without lifting her eyes or taking the slightest notice.

"What makes her like that? Is she stubborn?"

"You forget, Mrs Tranent, she has lost her mind entirely," said the nurse, gravely.

"Ah, yes, to be sure ; but still I think, Miss Stobie, you ought to rouse her out of that state a little."

"I abide by the doctor's orders—strictly."

"Yes, yes, that's so, that's right, still—let me try." And, going up close, she, with her faultlessly-gloved hand, laid hold of the kitten and attempted to take it away.

With a wild cry Natalie's fingers clung to the little animal, and lifting angry eyes she fixed them on Mrs Tranent with an ominous glitter.

"Good gracious! She can be wicked when she likes, I see," the lady exclaimed, recoiling.

The nurse made no response, her face was immovable.

"Is she often like this?" inquired Mrs Tranent, uneasily.

"No, she is very gentle," replied Miss Stobie.

"I fail to see it. See how she looks at me. She is a vixen that, believe me," remarked Mrs Tranent, moving away.

Again the nurse kept silence. As they passed out Mrs Tranent said—

"I brought up some grapes for young Falconer. How is he getting on?"

"Very well, but I'm afraid he will not be able to get your grapes for some weeks yet."

"Oh, indeed. Is he so bad as that?"

"Yes, it is malignant typhoid."

"Oh, dear me! Where do you keep him?" asked Mrs Tranent, glancing down the corridor in visible alarm.

"Over in the typhoid wards, on the other side."

"Ah!" breathed the lady, much relieved. "By the way, would you mind telling Dr Arbuckle—that was he talking to you when I came in, wasn't it?"

"Yes, that was Dr Arbuckle."

"Well, Miss Stobie, will you kindly ask him to call at The Larches when he leaves the hospital to-day? I have not been feeling so well of late, and really think I must get him to prescribe for me."

"Oh, yes: I will tell him if I see him again before he goes," said Miss Stobie, her experienced eye searching Mrs Tranent's face in vain for the first symptom of failing health. On the contrary, she was exceedingly fair, fresh, and rosy; her lips red, her eyes bright and blue, and her soft flaxen curls clinging in infantile rings about her glimpses of snow-white brow. There was no doubt Mrs Tranent was a fine-looking woman—an aggressively fine-looking woman; broad shouldered, full-bosomed, tall and stately, a veritable Juno, dressed in the latest fashion, richly, but with perfect taste. Her pretty little phaeton stood waiting for her at the hospital door, and as she stepped into it, she said to the man in big buttons who held the reins—

"Straight home, Brown."

CHAPTER IV.

DR ARBUCKLE GETS A PAYING PATIENT.

AS soon as Mrs Tranent arrived at The Larches she rang for the housemaid.

"I wish you, Nicol, to turn down the slats of the drawing-room shutters and make the room dark and cool. Show any visitors who may call in there."

"Yes'm."

"And, by the way, Nicol, I expect Dr Arbuckle shortly. While he is here, I am not at home to any one."

"No'm."

Mrs Tranent was not a hard mistress by any means. Her three servants, the cook, housemaid, and Brown, who was coachman and odd-man about the place, combined, had indeed a very easy time of it, so long as they did their work, which was comparatively light, and obeyed orders promptly. But Mrs Tranent would stand no fooling, and was, moreover, very particular about her servants keeping their own place, and showing her on all occasions due respect. She always bargained that her house servants should be called by their surnames; that they should wear servant's caps and aprons, which she herself provided; and that on no occasion whatever should they address her without first saying, "please ma'am."

When Mrs Tranent had bought The Larches some

nine years ago, she had found Canadian girls extremely difficult to manage. They objected to wearing caps, and would, though excellent workers otherwise, refuse to say, "please, ma'am," or to wear towards her that air of subservience which she considered the first qualification of a servant. So annoyed had she been with their independent ways, that at her husband's death she went back to Europe for a couple of years, and returning thence brought with her a model cook and housemaid, who were as docile and thoroughly trained as could be desired, she having procured them from some "Home" in London, England.

Mrs Tranent was a woman of means, having a snug private fortune of her own, a woman who was the envy of Toronto society circles for her high, aristocratic manners, her elegant five o'clock teas, and her charming little dinner parties. She could play a little, paint a little, and at an early period after her arrival at The Larches had with her husband joined the large and influential Methodist body. She was a woman whom people would have liked to talk about. Only there was positively nothing to say, except that she was an unmistakably fine-looking rich young widow, who took good care to give no cause for gossip.

The fact of her being rich and quite able to be a cheerful giver, had caused a deputation of the "Ladies' Benevolent Society" to wait upon her and ask her to become one of them, a request which she had graciously responded to, accompanying her assent with a handsome donation towards the praiseworthy objects of the Society. This happened while Mr Tranent lived, however, and it had been remarked at that time how superior in every

way she seemed to her husband, who, they whispered, was rather coarse and spoke shockingly bad grammar.

When Mrs Tranent entered her pale-blue and drab boudoir, a most æsthetically furnished apartment, upholstered with an eye to her flaxen hair and fair complexion, she shut the door, and coming up to the glass, looked at her own image long and searchingly, almost wistfully.

"Well, well, well!" she sighed softly, and laying off her out-door costume, she washed her face and arms with sweetly-perfumed soap, dried them carefully, and then applied to her face some rare cosmetic powder, giving her naturally fine complexion a peachy, infantile softness. Then she arranged the sunny rings carelessly over her brow, stuck a fancy pin on either side of the masses of golden coils crowning the top of her head, and, arraying herself in an elegant tea gown of pale-blue *crepe-de-cheine*, trimmed and faced with pink satin of the faintest hue, she again stood up before the glass and surveyed herself critically.

"Is it true, I wonder, that all things cometh to him who can wait?" she asked herself aloud, but just then came a low knock, which she recognised, at the door of the boudoir.

"Come in, Nicol."

Nicol opened the door quietly, and respectfully held out a silver salver on which lay a card with "*Dr Arbuckle, M.D.*," written on it in a bold hand.

"Thank you, Nicol. You showed the gentleman into the drawing-room?"

"Yes'm."

"That's right." And Nicol, white-capped, white-ap-

roned, and demure, noiselessly slipped out and closed the door.

"Oh, my heart, my heart!" exclaimed the lady to her image in the glass, laying both hands, which were large but white, upon her left side. "What shall I say is wrong? Wrong! My heart, of course—isn't that the truth? Well, here goes!" and she shook the tea gown down into graceful folds, let one drop of violet perfume fall into her tiny cambric handkerchief, and, arranging loosely a ring of hair that hung too stiffly over her brow, with another look at herself she descended to the drawing-room.

"How do you do, Dr Arbuckle?" she said with a charming blush and smile as she entered gracefully.

The Doctor was standing with his back toward her admiring a French engraving, and starting at the sound of her voice, he turned and apologised.

"I suppose we shall have to introduce ourselves to each other, since we are strangers yet. Be seated, pray," she added, waving him to a chair near.

The Doctor was a man like other men, susceptible to the charms of feminine beauty, but he seemed more than usually struck by the appearance of the lady before him. The room was rich and cool and dim, and the lady who now sat opposite him was in perfect keeping with her æsthetic surroundings. He must have thought her exceptionally fine-looking, for it seemed to cost him an effort to be on his good manners, and remember that he had been sent for.

"You wished to see me, I believe? Miss Stobie mentioned—"

"Ah—yes—I met you in the hospital to-day when I

was visiting poor Miss Wyngate. She occupies one of our private wards, you know. I mean—the Society pays for her there.”

“Yes, I understand,” said the Doctor, his eyes still fixed with a puzzled expression on Mrs Tranent’s handsome face.

“I hear, Doctor, that you make a specialty of nervous diseases, so I thought I would get you to prescribe for me. I’m dreadfully nervous at times.”

“Ah, indeed!” said the Doctor, pulling out his watch, and laying his fingers upon the lady’s wrist.

A deep red flush swept over her face from neck to brow, as he touched her hand, but he did not observe it; he was intently looking at the face of the watch and noting the pulsations. He felt the tremor, however, which had come over her, and, looking up with a smile as he put back his watch, he said—

“Yes, I see you are a little nervous. Do you sleep well at night?”

“Pretty well—not always. I am easily upset.”

“Well, you must keep your mind easy, and not worry about things. Take regular food and exercise, and I will give you a sedative which will sooth the nerves.”

“Oh, thank you, Doctor—thank you. It is such a comfort to get a medical man who understands one. I have had Dr Caxton these eight years, and I remember when we were up the Mediterranean last summer, I got quite ill, and an old doctor came and prescribed for me in French.”

“Did you understand him?”

“Oh, yes, I understand French very well; but, as I was saying, he did me no good. I believe in the young

doctors who have the advantages of the latest discoveries in science."

As Mrs Tranent spoke, the puzzled, searching expression faded from the Doctor's countenance, and he now looked at her with calm admiration. She was indeed a fine-looking woman.

"There is a friend of mine, an elderly widow lady, whom I am sure you would benefit very much. She is terribly bothered with nervousness. I must get her to see you; and oh! by the way, there is Mrs Newington, a lady of means with a large family, who has just come to settle in the city. At the 'Ladies' Meeting' the other day she was just asking me to recommend to her a really good doctor; her daughters are rather delicate. I must introduce you to her."

"You are very kind, Mrs Tranent."

"I am kind to my friends when I recommend you to them, Doctor," was the smiling reply, and though the compliment was rather broad for perfect taste, still, coming from a lady who was evidently warm-hearted and impulsive, the Doctor swallowed it. Certainly it was not in his line, nor could he afford to quarrel with good fortune when it came in his way.

"I will tell Brown to call for the medicine," said the lady, as she shook hands with the Doctor, "and you will call again and see what effect it has had?"

When the Doctor reached the front door he found the housemaid, a pink of neatness, standing holding the door open for him. Mrs Tranent had an exceedingly well ordered house, and was evidently a lady, thought the Doctor, as he passed out; and walking up the little avenue of larches, he smiled to think of his luck in se-

curing this wealthy patient. Nay! not only herself, but these well-to-do friends whom she had mentioned. Well! well! it's a long lane has no turning; at this rate he would soon round the corner and leave impecuniosity far behind.

CHAPTER V.

FREDDIE, YOUNG CANADA.

MRS Tranent had her trials. She had a son, whom at his birth she had named Frederick, but who was known far and near as Freddie. Although but ten years old, he had the vigour and energy of twenty. When only six, the long yellow curls which were his nurse's delight and labour to comb and curl over her fingers, he had ruthlessly shorn off, because he had been mistaken for a girl once or twice. To be called a girl, Freddie felt, was an intolerable insult, which he revenged by stoning the boy who did so, and afterwards whanking off, with the cook's scissors, one by one, the long yellow locks which had provoked the attack. This he did on his sixth birthday, about an hour or so before he was called in to be dressed for the great juvenile party which his mother had got up in his honour. For this special occasion a jaunty navy blue sailor suit had been ordered; over the ample gold-braided collar of which Mrs Tranent thought the matchless flaxen curls should fall most bewitchingly. When, therefore, Freddie presented himself before his mother with short, irregular tufts of tow sticking out all over his head, her wrath and dismay may be imagined. The cherub, minus his soft halo of curling hair, looked a very ordinary, fat-faced boy; so much so, that Mrs Tranent first seized him and slipped him well, and afterwards cried from pure vexation.

From that day forward he had been the plague and torment of her life, evincing a most unaccountable affinity for street arabs, and an outspoken admiration for their free and easy mode of living. Their language, which was a mixture of smart slang and bad grammar, he had adopted entire, to the exclusion of more conventional methods of expression. He bawled and made the kitchen a scene of desolation one day, because he could not be allowed to go on the streets and sell papers. He saluted rev. gentlemen who came to visit at The Larches with "Hello, guv'ner!" and made a point of driving off with the butcher boy every time he came. His mother had no control over him whatever. At his birth he had been turned over completely to the care of a nurse, Mrs Trant understanding that was the correct thing for a society lady to do, and for five years the nurse had mothered him. At five, having outgrown his nurse, his mother tried her hand at managing him, and failed. Even she herself had to confess that as a mother she was certainly not a success. But she was proud of his saucy, jaunty ways; and when he said "No! I wor't" to her, it was always with a shake of the yellow curls which brought him off scot free. Now, however, when there were no more curls to shake, the offence seemed so gross and so frequent that open war had become a daily occurrence between mother and son, the former scoring an occasional victory only by dint of superior force.

About a month after Dr Arbuckle's first visit she had been roused from an early morning nap by a terrific ring at the front-door bell, and simultaneously the sound of an angry Hibernian voice holding forth in the hall. With a palpitating pulse she rang for Nicol.

"Whatever is the matter, Nicol? Who is that talking so loudly at this hour?"

"Please 'um, it's some mischief Master Freddie's been hup to."

"Freddie!—impossible. Why, the child isn't up yet, is he?"

"Please 'um, he went hout this morning hat five o'clock; Brown saw him agoing."

"Oh, mercy! What am I to do with that boy? That'll do, Nicol—tell the pe'son—stay, who is it?"

"Please 'um, I don't know; she—"

"Never mind; I'll come down myself;" and, with a sigh of despair, Mrs Tranent rose, and throwing on a rose-coloured wrapper, and a soft, white boating shawl over her head, came sailing down the softly-carpeted stairs.

"What do you mean by coming here and kicking up a noise like this?" demanded the lady, towering finely in her rose wrapper and long train.

"What does I mane?" retorted the irate intruder.

"Faix, then, I manes just this—that if yez don't be afther chainin' up that divil av a bye av yours, it's black and blue mesilf 'll be makin' the hide av him."

"What has he been doing now?" demanded Mrs Tranent, with visible annoyance.

"Doin'?" shouted the woman, shaking the raw hide threateningly. "Sure, isn't it afther 'im the ould man an' mesilf have been chasin' this half-hour an' more, him an' another divil, an' thim a-turnin' round at iviry shtrate corner, an' cursin' like haythens, wid all thir tin fingers sphread out afore the pint av thir noses?"

"Tchick! tchick! oh dear me! But you had no right

to chase the boy. What was he doing to you? I thought he was in bed."

"Bed!" shouted the woman, with added wrath; "oh, thin! nary a bed. Shure, an' hasn't he been gallopin' me poor, onforthunate cow to death ivir sin' five o'clock this blessed marnin', blasht his sowl! Yes, ma'am! himsilf an' another bye, ashtride of Paddy M'Guire's ould plug, wid soords in their hands, if yez plaze; an' me laddie-bug wavin' a red handkercher afore me poor cow, an' a-racin' an' chasin' her, till the divil a dhrap o' milk she'll let down, she be so clane bate out wid the way they illbehaved to her. Och! och! it's mesilf that's heart scalded wid that same bye. Shure, last week didn't he come over to the hin-house, he an' some more av 'em—"

Here Mrs Tranent turned and fled from a further recital of her son's exploits, but it subsequently transpired that the worthy Irishwoman did well to be angry; for Freddie, with the assistance of a bigger boy whose acquaintance he had made, had really been rehearsing an amateur bull-fight suggested by a story which the big boy had been reading, with Mrs O'Brien's cow, Paddy M'Guire's long-ribbed rosinante, and a red silk handkerchief, as the chief features of the show.

A handsome black ostrich feather, costing some eight or nine dollars, also disappeared, and was never again seen after that morning; Freddie having stuck it into his hat to make him look like a Spanish matador.

Mrs Tranent felt that things had come to a crisis. She sent and paid the damage claimed—viz., ten quarts of milk; but her nerves were quite upset by this latest adventure. Something or other *must* be done. She

must consult some *man* about what was best to be done with a boy of that kind, and so she told Brown to take the carriage and drive down to Dr Arbuckle's door with a note.

In one short month Dr Arbuckle had become quite a busy man. Not only had the two friends whom Mrs Tranent had mentioned become his regular patients; others, prompted from the same source, had also called him in, and liking his genial manner and gentlemanly bearing, had installed him as their family doctor. He was beginning to be envied by the less fortunate medicals who still waited on, trusting to some epidemic to help them out of the rut.

So quietly, and in such a matter-of-fact way, had Mrs Tranent made his wonderful skill known among her circle of friends, that no one, least of all the Doctor himself, suspected her interest in him. She had given a garden party, at which he had been an invited guest, but she had paid no more attention to him than to the others; and besides, Dr Caxton was invited also. Dr Arbuckle would have been less or more than man had he not admired her, moving, magnificently arrayed, among her guests. She was a very fine-looking woman indeed; not so well read, perhaps, as well travelled, having been in France, Italy, and England for some time. The Doctor, on the whole, rather liked the fair widow, and the widow if she knew it, never by word or look betrayed that she knew. She was a sensible woman.

It was well on in the afternoon when he arrived, in response to the note. He had been busy since morning, and had only received her note when he arrived home.

"Then you haven't had dinner, Doctor?"

"Time enough," answered the Doctor, with a smile.

"Stay and dine with me this afternoon—I want to take your advice. You men know so much better than we what to do in some cases;" and Mrs Tranent laid her hand on the bell.

"Covers for two, Nicol," she said, when the housemaid appeared.

"Please 'um, and for Master Freddie too?"

"No, the naughty boy! He shall take his dinner in the nursery alone for his conduct this morning."

The maid withdrew, and Mrs Tranent turned to the Doctor.

"It's about Freddie I want to speak to you," she said.

"Ah! what ails the boy? Nothing serious I should say. I got a glimpse of him pursuing a hen in an alleyway this forenoon, and just now I saw him walking like a tight-rope dancer along the stable roof."

Mrs Tranent uttered an exclamation of impatience, and again rang for the servant.

"Is Freddie on the stable roof, Nicol?"

"Please 'um, yes, he won't come down."

"Then *make* him. Tell Brown to bring him down at once."

"Yes'm," said Nicol, and vanished.

"What on earth, Doctor, am I to do with that boy?"

"Why, what has he been doing?" queried the Doctor, with twinkling eyes.

"Don't you see, Doctor? always in mischief; think of him even now on the stable roof!"

"Pooh! That's nothing, Mrs Tranent. What if he does fancy walking anywhere rather than on *terra firma*?

I confess I rather like to see a youngster with some go in him," replied the Doctor, quite cheerfully.

"He'll break his neck one of those days; I know he will. But this morning I got *such* a shock. I haven't got over it yet."

Mrs Tranent recounted for the Doctor's benefit the early morning visit of the boisterous Irishwoman and the cause thereof.

Dr Arbuckle listened with quite a professional air until the bull-fight came on, when he leant back and burst into a hearty laugh.

"I tell you, Mrs Tranent, that boy of yours is a brick—Freddie's a brick. Where is he now, I wonder?"

"Here she are!" replied Freddie, promptly, who, when he heard he was to dine in the nursery alone, had hurried down of his own accord, and hied thither to plead his own cause. He had slipped up softly to the drawing-room door in time to hear himself discussed and approved of by the Doctor.

"Here she are! and I say, Doc' Buckle, don't you think it a shame for a feller to take his dinner all'one upstairs, when I ain't done nothin' bad?"

"Freddie Tranent! you are a bad, bad boy, and you know it," said the half-smiling, half-annoyed mother. "Don't you call it naughty and wicked to go racing poor Mrs O'Brien's cow—"

"But, ma, Mrs O'Brien ain't poor. She owns that shanty, and has two hundred dollars in the bank. Sure's leather! Sam Tuck tole me so."

"Oh, dear, dear!" sighed the defeated lady.

"Run away upstairs and get washed, and tell Nicol to give you your blue suit to put on."

"But, ma, the blue suit's all tar."

"Tar!"

"Yes, ma, chock-a-block. Me'n Sam Tuck was havin' larks with the man that was layin' the streets. We wasn't doing a single thing to him, only firing peas in his eyes, when he went to hit me a clip, and I sat down on the tar and couldn't get up again."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Mrs Tranent in wild despair; "go and get something on, for any sake."

"And can I get dinner with you and Doc' Buckle in the dining-room, then?" asked Freddie, with brisk eagerness.

"Oh, well—what do you say, Doctor? Do you think I ought to let him off this time?"

The Doctor, whose fine teeth had been gleaming from under his dusky moustache during this colloquy, pulled himself up with an effort at gravity.

"Oh, yes, I think so—if Freddie will do better for the time to come."

"You bet your boots, Doc' Buckle; I'll be awful good. Sure pop."

"Mercy! run away. Don't you think, Doctor, that boy would be better under somebody who is used to the care of children? I mean some one who makes his living by it; some man who keeps a boys' school?" asked Mrs Tranent, when Freddie had gone.

Dr Arbuckle mused a little. His thoughts had flown back to his own boyhood, orphaned and lonely, when his heart had grown sick with yearning for the mother-love and sympathy he had envied other boys the possession of; and he wondered if his mother—the sweet dream-face he remembered so dimly—would have sent him

away from her own tender care as Mrs Tranent had now wished to send Freddie. But then Freddie was a terrible boy, a really troublesome boy, there was no gainsaying that—and he laughed again as he thought of him. Still, in spite of his better judgment—probably because there was no one else to do it—he took his part.

“Oh, I would wait a little, Mrs Tranent. He will grow out of all that by and by. What he wants is something to do. How does he stand at school?”

“Dux—always dux—except when he forgets and is late. But then he is sure to be up again the very first chance. I’m sure I don’t know where and when he learns his lessons.”

“He’s a smart little fellow. I think, Mrs Tranent, you should try a little patience with him for a while—let him have animals—rabbits, pigeons—to look after.”

“Oh! pray, Dr Arbuckle, don’t suggest such a thing; he would have the nasty little things up in his bedroom, I believe. Why, our milkman brought him a bantam rooster about a year ago, and as I was coming in from a party one morning about one o’clock, what should greet my ears but a loud crow. That boy had actually taken the rooster in a basket up to his bedroom, and there they were locked in together. I was too tired to bother rousing him up, so I went to bed; and, Doctor, if you’ll believe me, that bird crowed every hour all night through! But as soon as he went to school next day you may be sure I got cook to make short work of it.”

“Didn’t he object?”

“Oh, he never knew what had become of it. I suppose if he knew even now that he had eaten of it, he would raise the roof.”

Again the Doctor mused. He had been a boy himself; and an unaccountable pity for this little rascal Freddie filled his soul.

"Do you object to having pets for him?" he said.

"Oh, certainly! What he wants is to be sent away to a boys' school, under the constant superintendence of a man who will make him behave."

"But won't you miss the boy?" asked the Doctor, fixing his dark eyes anxiously on the lady's face.

"No, not I. Besides, it's for his good," she added, prompted to say so by some unusual expression in the Doctor's look.

They were still talking the matter over when the door bell rang, and in a few moments Freddie's voice, clear as a bell, came running into the drawing-room from the hall.

"Hello! mamma! ain't you sittin' there in the drawing-room talking for all your worth to Doc' Buckle? Here's Nicol gone and tole a lie to Mrs White, come to call. Said you weren't at home—when you were. Won't Nicol go to hell-fire if she tells whoppers like that?"

Mrs Tranent laid her hand on her heart, and with wide, horrified eyes, whispered faintly—

"Doctor, oh, Doctor—that boy! What shall I do?—I am faint at the thought of it. Mrs White, of all people!"

At this moment Freddie rushed in—

"Ain't it, ma? Ain't it a lie? Ain't you in?"

Mrs Tranent, forgetting herself, made a lunge at Freddie, and seizing his arm, shook him without mercy.

"You—you awful boy! how dare you? Go this in—

stant and say I am ill, and that Dr Arbuckle is here to prescribe for me! Oh! oh! oh!" and Mrs Tranent stamped her pretty slipper upon the carpet.

"Are you sick, ma?" asked Freddie, backing slowly out of the room in much perplexity and doubt.

"Sick! sick to death—go—hurry!" and thus adjured Freddie returned to the door, which was just closing on the lady, who had quietly left her card. Ere Nicol could prevent him, he had pushed outside, and was shouting at top of his voice, in his eagerness to repair the mischief he had done—

"Say Mis White—hallo! ma says she's drefful sick to death, and Doc' Buckle's persecuting her. That's why. You ain't mad, are you?"

CHAPTER VI.

“I'M IN LOVE WITH A MAD WOMAN!”

IT had taken no little mediation to induce Mrs Tranent to allow her boy to stay at home for another year at least before sending him to a boy's school. Dr Arbuckle held doggedly to a theory of his own that mothers should mother their own children, at least so long as they were children. Mrs Tranent's disinclination to do so had disappointed him with her not a little.

She had always appeared so kind, so large-heartedly generous in any charitable concern she took up in conjunction with other ladies; and, moreover, had been so unostentatiously serviceable to himself, that he had concluded the maternal feeling must necessarily be strong also.

Herein lay his mistake. He did not see that the giving of a large cheque, which was duly announced and praised in the daily papers, or the attendance at the Society's meetings where she was consulted, deferred to, and openly admired, differed very widely from the daily and hourly unrecorded self-denial of true motherhood.

Mrs Tranent was entirely willing to be a fashionable Christian worker; nay, more than once she had driven in her little phaeton to the doors of some miserable unfortunates, and with her own hands had dispensed her own and the Society's bounties, and been called an

angel therefor, both to her face and behind her back. But to be a Christian mother, to overshadow her boy with invisible wings of ever present love and care, "even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," to keep him from the evil and prompt him to the good, to sympathise with him and make him feel that, though all the world were against him, mother was always at his back to strengthen, encourage, and help him to think rightly—at such a task as this Mrs Tranent drew the line. She had brought him into the world, supplied him with a competent nurse, also with all the food he could eat and the raiment he could wear or tear; she was willing, nay anxious, to send him to an expensive school—beyond that she struck. She had also sent him to a Sunday school of their own denomination, where he amused himself popping peas at the bald poll of the superintendent; indeed, he provided himself with peas every Saturday night for the morrow's use, as punctually as the elder people provided themselves with small change for the collection ladle.

This lack of motherliness, this peculiarity, grated on Dr Arbuckle disagreeably. He thought of it, and let it worry him after he had sunk into his easy chair and lit his meerschaum. She had been so soft, so blushingly lovable and womanly to him, so hard and heartless to Freddie.

Women in general were such contradictory, incomprehensible creatures, he thought it must be on account of Freddie's extraordinary liveliness, and the incessant worry he gave her. Anyhow, under the soothing influence of his meerschaum, he grew charitable and less disposed to acknowledge his disappointment, for, after

all, Mrs Tranent was a fine-looking woman, and a charming conversationalist.

His meditations were interrupted by a ring at the surgery bell.

"Miss Stobie!" he exclaimed, as, opening the door, the light fell full on the face of the head nurse. And he shook hands warmly with the lady.

"Can you come down to the hospital for a little, Doctor? Miss Wyngate has lost all control. The house surgeon insists that she must go to the Asylum at once; but I have an idea that this is but the prelude to recovery. After the last fit like this, she had a long, lucid interval—longer than ever before, and I do hate to have her go away, poor thing."

The Doctor took down his coat from the nail and put it on while Miss Stobie spoke.

"Ah! I intended to come down to-night, but I was called down to The Larches, and stayed the evening."

Miss Stobie raised her eyebrows slightly, but not in surprise.

"I have observed that you can soothe her when no one else can, so leaving her with the nurse, I took the car to the door here, and I'm glad I found you."

"I'm more than glad. I'm mad at myself, too, for not being down before. I haven't seen her these two days."

"Three days," corrected the nurse.

"Ah, is it? Yes, we'll go. Back about twelve, Mrs Rodgers," he said to his servant, who stood waiting in the hall; you had better go to bed."

As he opened the door, the tinkle of the street car bell was heard. It stopped at his signal, and in a few moments they were at the hospital gate.

The private ward door was shut when they came up, but at a peculiar rap from the nurse, it was opened from within. Natalie was pacing rapidly up and down the room. It was warm, and the Doctor doffed his hat and light overcoat, and began walking beside her.

"We will have a walk, Miss Wyngate; come with me," he said, and passed his arm through hers; but she turned upon him with a look of aversion and terror, and fled shrieking around the room.

"Dear me, dear me!—this is sad," he murmured.

"You shall not touch me, you horrible man. Keep the ring, keep the money—ah! ah!" she cried, looking at the Doctor with an unearthly glitter in her eyes.

The Doctor watched her with ineffable pity, she looked so weirdly, wildly beautiful, standing at bay—poor, phantom-haunted soul! In utter perplexity the Doctor looked at her, an unusual moisture gathering in his own eyes as he saw Miss Stobie's calm orbs fill. He unconsciously felt for his handkerchief, and drawing it out, some hard things fell on the floor. The under-nurse stooped and lifted it, handing it to him with a smile.

"What on earth!—why, if that isn't Freddie Trant's mouth-organ! Now, how on earth did the rascal manage to put it there? By Jove!—it might as soon been one of his mother's spoons," said the Doctor, with a smile, to Miss Stobie.

"A pity but you could play on it. I think she is musical, the way she hums snatches of operettas at times."

"Is that so?" said the Doctor, as if struck with an idea. "Look here, Miss Stobie; couldn't you send for some one up to the house for my violin?"

"Certainly—anything you wish, Doctor," said the nurse, and in a short time the violin was in the Doctor's hands and he screwing up the strings.

Presently he began in what was scarce higher than a musical breathing, the gentle melody of "Home, Sweet Home!" with his eyes fixed on hers to watch the effect. At first she stood unchanged, but as he played on, the frightened glitter in her eyes softened, her hands became unclined and hung by her side, her head bent lightly forward, her set lips softened and parted, her face became irradiated with mild surprise and pleasure, and she took one and then another slow step in his direction.

"Play on, Doctor! play on!" whispered Miss Stobie, in scarce controlled excitement, but the Doctor needed no prompting. He was exerting a new-felt power, born of intense anxiety and desire to bring back this beautiful, innocent soul, who had been driven forth into the haunted wastes of madness by the demon of despair. He could not let her go; she must be charmed back within the safe confines of reason and mental lucidity. If it could be done, he would do it, and the whole power of his inflexible will was concentrated in the gaze he bent upon her as he played on.

Both nurses exchanged glances, when with illuminated face, she took another and still another step near the player, and began to beat time with her right hand to the rythm of the tune. At last she glided up close, as if drawn towards him, all the glittering wildness of her eyes dying out before the slow dawning of human surprise and delight.

So close did she come to him, with her gaze riveted on his, that he felt her breath upon his cheek; gentler

and more gentle grew her expression, her manner became grave and serious, and her sweet lips began to quiver with emotion. He had conquered! With a sudden, swift instinct, he glided into the slow and solemn strains of the "Old Hundred," but ere he reached the fourth line she had thrown her arms upon his shoulders, weeping convulsively.

"Take her and lay her down, nurse," said the Doctor, in a low undertone, and as they took the sobbing girl and bore her to the bed, the Doctor, white as a sheet, and with a strange feeling of utter exhaustion, sank down in a chair and leant back, covering his eyes with his hand.

For nearly half an hour there was perfect silence, broken only by the slowly subsiding sobs from the bed. By and by they also ceased, and there was only the sound of soft, regular breathing.

Miss Stobie with noiseless feet crossed over to the Doctor and touched him.

"She is asleep, Doctor—sound asleep. I did not think it was possible. Are you a mesmerist?"

Dr Arbuckle shuddered.

"Mesmerist! No—not I. But when I saw the effect of the old melody, saw the nervous glower relax, I took such a dread lest she might lapse back again, that I played, and kept playing with the determination that she shouldn't, that I would hold her and keep her there. But I tell you, Miss Stobie, it's terrible work. I haven't got over it yet; get me something bracing, will you, please?"

Miss Stobie handed the keys to the under-nurse and whispered to her, and she went out, returning soon

with a glass of some liquid, which the Doctor swallowed.

"I will be round early in the morning," said he, as he put on his coat. "I shall be anxious to hear the result of this unprofessional treatment."

Miss Stobie smiled brightly. Doctor Arbuckle was one of the doctors she liked.

"Indeed, so shall I, so don't be tied to conventional hours. And let me thank you, Doctor, sincerely."

"Good-night, and a good night's rest."

"Good-night, Doctor—stay, you have forgot something," and she handed Freddie's mouth-organ.

Dr Arbuckle took it, with a strange disagreeable feeling of dislike to the inanimate thing, which had been the cause of so much good to his patient. The touch of it, as he put it in his pocket, annoyed him, simply because it belonged to The Larches. As sudden was the almost instantaneous dislike he had taken to the mistress of The Larches, the very lady over whom he had been ruminating so pleasantly a couple of hours ago. He saw her in his mind's eye, the tall, full-bosomed, aggressive blonde, smiling and attractive in her beautifully-appointed house; but between her and himself there now glided another—pale, with dark masses of dishevelled hair thrust wildly back from her white brow, with large, wistful, melancholy eyes bent on his, soul seeing soul dimly in the darkness; and with an unconscious recoil from the smiling blonde, he murmured—

"Natalie! Natalie! Oh, child, come back to me!"

The desire was strong upon him still to bring her back to life and hope, and perfect mental health. He could not shake it off; it had taken perfect possession of him, and with it came a dread lest being being restored

he might after all lose her. He went home and to bed with his mind full of her.

But Dr Arbuckle was a man of many moods, for after tossing about sleeplessly till the clock struck two in the city, he burst into a short ironical laugh and exclaimed—

“The idea! That I, a physician, should be in love with a mad woman!”

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT IS IT TO LOVE?

AT ten o'clock next morning Dr Arbuckle called at the hospital.

"Good-morning, Miss Stobie," said he, shaking hands with the nurse, whose grave grey eyes, as she returned his greeting, shone with some inward pleasure.

"How is she to-day?" he queried in a low tone.

"Come and see," was the cheerful reply; and Miss Stobie, with light footsteps, turned down the corridor to the ward, keeping several steps ahead.

Miss Wyngate, in a neat, dark dress, was up, and seated in a chair, sewing quietly. Her dark hair was arranged in smooth coils about her head; her face was pale, pure, and serene; her fine eyes soft and beaming with quick intelligence; and in her lap lay curled up, in comfort and content, the white kitten.

At the first glimpse of her, the Doctor turned and exchanged a glad glance of meaning with Miss Stobie, and then advanced and held out his hand.

"How are you this morning, Miss Wyngate?" he said gently. "Getting stronger, I hope?"

"Oh, much better, thank you," she said, rising and shaking hands with the most perfect good-breeding. "I think I must be well now."

She looked at the Doctor calmly as she spoke, and offered him a chair which was near.

The Doctor sat down, and presently Miss Stobie

catching the question in the patient's eyes, hastened to explain.

"This is Dr Arbuckle who attended you in your illness. You don't remember him, do you?"

Natalie bowed politely, and a faint colour rose to her thin cheek.

"No," she said smiling. "I do not recollect having seen him before."

A strange sense of disappointment came like a chill upon the Doctor's spirits as he heard her. He did not know till then how he had hoped she would recognise him. The calm, soft innocence of her looks thrilled him through and through; the pity of it all melted his very soul. Nurse Stobie read his thoughts, and, understanding his disappointment, continued—

"It was Dr Arbuckle who brought the kitten, my dear."

"Oh! indeed," she said, her eyes lighting up with pleasure. "Thank you very much Doctor; it was very good of you to think of me. Indeed, I love pussy, it is such a pretty playful little thing, it makes me laugh when, perhaps—" a sigh finished the sentence, and an expression of profound sadness settled on her face.

"Miss Stobie," said the Doctor, suddenly turning, "it's a beautiful day, and Miss Wyngate is convalescent now. Don't you think you and I could go out and let her have a short drive round the outskirts of the city in the afternoon during your hours off?"

Nurse Stobie was taken aback a little. Such a proposition from a Doctor she had never heard before, and she hesitated a little.

"Would you like to go and get a drive, my dear?"

she added. Somehow Miss Stobie had fallen into a way of addressing this patient like a child beloved. Her pitiful history, her beauty, and her helplessness had appealed to her maternal nature. She was quite out of the general run of patients who had friends to visit them.

Natalie had no friends. Her mother's exclusive notions had kept them within an extremely limited circle, and those had been so shocked by the revelation of her extreme poverty as to be glad when they learned that the Ladies' Benevolent Society had taken the case in hand. With the ladies they left her; it would not have been the correct thing to interfere. Nurse Stobie, much older in experience than in years, understood it all, and took the poor friendless girl to her big heart.

"Oh! very much. I would so much like to see the fields and the trees, and, oh! the lake!" replied Natalie, clasping her thin fingers in rapture at the prospect. Seeing Miss Stobie hesitate, however, she instantly added— "But just as you wish, dear Nurse. If you don't wish me to go, of course I won't even want to."

"You dear good girl! Yes, you shall go, but I will be unable to go with you. However, you wont mind driving her out yourself, Doctor, will you?"

"Not at all. Well, suppose we say three o'clock. Will that do?"

"Very well, we will be ready," said Nurse Stobie.

"I must thank you, Doctor, you are very, very good. I do want to get well soon, and—and—get some work to do," said Natalie, her pale lips quivering as she spoke.

"Work!—nonsense! You are to stay here and get well; you mustn't think of these things for a long time

yet," said the Doctor, firmly, and clasping her thin fingers in his for a moment, he departed.

This was the first of many drives round the outside of the city, and along the lake shore, sometimes with, but often without Miss Stobie for company. Since that awful evening she had not once gone back or shown the least symptom of mental derangement, and she herself now understood the sad condition she had been in, though no one had told her. With returning bodily strength her mental perceptions, partially clouded, shone forth with renewed strength; and, now uncurbed and unrestricted by a superior will, her conscience and her faculties reasserted themselves. She now saw the folly of the overweening pride of family and position which had mistakenly subjected her to daily martyrdom, to starvation, to madness, nay, death itself, rather than allow her to be classified with people who honestly earned their own living by honourable occupations; and, believing that all hope of ever getting back what had been swallowed up in Dr Bruno's pet scheme might be given up, she had come to the resolution regarding her own future. Of this resolution she intended to tell Dr Arbuckle the first opportunity, and to take his advice about it before mentioning it to Miss Stobie. What friends she had in both! Miss Stobie was to her an angel in human guise, an angel in the calmness of her strength, her wisdom, her unvarying gentleness, her womanly loving-kindness to herself in private. To outsiders, and sometimes to those under her, Miss Stobie seemed a cold, capable, thoroughly qualified nurse, quite equal to her responsible position, and not at all troubled with sentiment. But Natalie had seen her when the veil of

official reserve was withdrawn, and the picture to her grateful eyes was that of a most lovable woman. As for the Doctor—gratitude to him had gone deeper still. The thought of him, his kindness, his rich, low, tender voice, that played on her nerves like the wind over an Æolian harp—ah!—the day could never dawn when she could cease to remember him, and all that he had done for—and been to her!

It was a beautiful afternoon when, driving slowly along the lake shore, Dr Arbuckle in one of those reveries into which he invariably fell when driving Natalie out lately, was startled by his companion saying, softly—

“Don’t you think I am getting steadily better, Doctor?”

“Why! Yes of course you are, Miss Wyngate.”

“And I’ll continue to get strong, you think?”

“Undoubtedly! Why? What makes you ask?” he said, turning to her with a troubled look. Dr Arbuckle was complete master of facial expression where his ordinary patients were concerned; but in presence of this frail woman, whom he had brought back to reason and rational life, he was incapable of subterfuge of any kind whatever. He could not be otherwis than utterly honest with her—his openness was almost boyish. He could not encounter the clear, guileless look of her soft, dark eyes, and be other than honest himself.

She had unconsciously taken possession of his whole being, the while he laughed scornfully at himself and said, over and over again—

“What a fool I am! As soon as she is out of my care some fellow who can’t appreciate her half as much as I do will marry her, and off she’ll go. Ah well! I

can't help myself—I love her, and that's the end of it.” This question about her strength had alarmed him; it portended something. Therefore he asked—

“Why?”

“Because, Doctor, I want your advice. Will you help me?” she asked, turning her eyes in anxious appeal to his.

“My darling! oh, my darling!” were the words that leaped from his heart, but he gave them no utterance. He only said, with a slight accession of colour—

“Certainly; you know, you *must* know, I will help you in every way I can.”

“Well, I would rather never leave the hospital, never, never again. Miss Stobie has been so kind, so very kind, and I love her so much.” Natalie paused, musing a little, and collecting her thoughts as she gazed dreamily across the lake. The Doctor looked at her in uneasy anticipation. What could she mean?

“I have been thinking for the last few weeks, indeed, ever since my reason was restored,” she said to his amazement, “what kind of work I am best fitted for in the world. I would have worked long ago if mamma had only allowed me. I know now it is sinful to be idle in a world where there is so much work to do, and to keep one's self aloof from the workers who keep the world going. I have thrown off the past, I wish to bury it for ever. I am young yet, and, please God to grant me health and strength, I will be no longer a worthless drone in the world's busy hive. I would like to become a nurse—”

“Impossible! You shall do nothing of the kind,” cried the Doctor, decisively, in his heat flicking up the pony till it started off at a trot.

“Wo—wo! lady; I didn't mean that—there—wo!”

The obedient animal, apparently understanding that the whip up was a mistake, obeyed and resumed its former easy walk.

“Why! what has put such a ridiculous notion into your head, Miss Wyngate?” demanded the Doctor, nervously.

“It is not ridiculous to earn my own living honourably, is it, Doctor?” she asked, turning to him with her usual straight look.

The Doctor looked down sideways at the horse's legs.

“As a general rule, no,” he said, briefly.

“I would like to go in as nurse-in-training, under Miss Stobie, for two years, if you will be so good as to recommend me,” she pursued, looking at him anxiously; but the Doctor still studied the fine proportions of his horse. He made no answer, but began to fidget about in his seat. Then suddenly seizing the whip he laid it about the horse's flanks, twitching the bit as he did so; and the animal, sure there was no mistake this time, dashed off at full speed, while the Doctor held the reins in grim silence.

Natalie glanced up into his face, and saw it set and angry. What had she said; what had she done to offend him like this?

On they sped, still in silence, till they reached a turn of the road, round which they dashed, speeding on toward the railway crossing. Suddenly a white vapour moving toward them from the other side of the wood caught his eye, and with a sharp exclamation, he suddenly turned the horse's head, and drove back again. Not a minute too soon; for the train, turning a curve, came

thundering over the crossing, startling the horse and making it rear.

"Good heavens! what a brute I am. Miss Wyngate, will you ever forgive me?" he exclaimed, in a desperate tone, as he turned the horse's head and drove slowly back.

"I don't understand, Doctor; I couldn't think what was wrong. I wondered if I had offended you," she said, looking at his pale, set face in wonder.

"Offended me! no," he laughed, shortly; "but, seriously—please, don't trouble yourself about this notion of work—of becoming a nurse!"

"Why?" she asked, looking at him, searchingly.

"Why?" he repeated, dropping the reins and catching her hands; "because I am mad, Natalie—because I love you, my darling—because I want you for my wife."

"Mad, surely!" murmured Natalie faintly; "mad indeed, to want *me*, a poor forlorn, homeless wretch brought back from the grave. Oh, Doctor!—your pity is too cruel; I cannot bear it," and, freeing her hands, she hid her face in them.

Dr Arbuckle was totally unmanned; he was afraid of what he had done, but again, with redoubled force, had that dread come over him, the dread of losing her.

After a few moments she looked up, with a faint attempt at a smile as she dried her wet eyes.

"You carry your kindness too far, Doctor; I shall earn my own living. And I must ever be grateful to you, but I could allow no man to marry me for pity."

Her heart was wonderfully sore as she said this, but she must needs say it, nevertheless.

The Doctor saw the blunder he had made, and hastened to rectify it.

“Surely, Natalie, surely you will believe me when I tell you it is not pity, but love, love only, that prompts me. If you cannot love me in return, I cannot help it. I dreaded it would be like this; I have said to myself all along, ‘She will never care for you,’ and it is so, I see. I must bear it as best as I can. But I love you always and forever. I loved you the first time I saw you, lying unconscious in the ward; I have loved you ever since. I am infatuated, I suppose, but I cannot help it.”

Natalie looked at him with searching wistfulness.

“What is it to love?” she asked earnestly, with sudden pallor.

“To love?” he burst out passionately. “It is to have you in my mind always, night and day wherever I go, whoever may be present. It is to think of you, dream of you, long for you till my heart fails and my spirit sinks, to be revived only by your smile. It is to feel life empty and worthless without you, to feel it heaven where you are, the dread of living without you insupportable. This is love, as I feel it.”

“Then I love *you*,” was the solemn, straightforward answer.

CHAPTER VIII.

DR ARBUCKLE'S BOLD GAME.

MISS Stobie's surprise when she was told of Natalie's engagement to the Doctor was not so great as might have been expected. She was a woman of large experience and quick intuitions. The mysterious sixth sense, completely lacking in some and but faintly developed in others, was in her case keen and unerring. From the first of her patient's convalescence she had felt that it would be so, and she was delighted to find she had been right.

But against all the Doctor's remonstrances Natalie held her own in regard to becoming a trained nurse. Suffering had developed the latent strength of her nature, and there had been a complete reaction in her mind against the old conventional ideas respecting the status of women's work. In this resolution she was encouraged by Miss Stobie, who, independent of her personal liking for the applicant, saw that she had the qualities necessary for a good nurse—viz., superior education, moral character, quietness, reticence, and the rare quality of being obedient and teachable. The only drawback to her present entrance upon duties was the lack of bodily strength, but that, Miss Stobie said, was a fault that would be mending every day. Cheerful company and exercise of the muscles would soon tell, for she was

young, and now, but for the past dark memory which still overshadowed her life—happy, with the greatest happiness known to mortals, that of loving and being loved.

The first day that Dr Arbuckle saw her attired in the natty white cap and neat costume of the hospital staff he stood trying to look disapproval, with eyes that glistened with admiration. For obvious reasons it had been decided by Miss Stobie to keep the fact of the engagement a secret between the three, unless indeed observant eyes detected the intimacy, when it would be time enough to explain. There was no use in attracting farther attention to Natalie at the present, it was enough for the insatiable public to know that the unfortunate Miss Wyngate had entered the Hospital Training School and was doing very well indeed.

As yet she was in her month of probation, and the Doctor had not yet relinquished the hope of inducing her to give up and marry him out of hand. His practice was a well-paying one, and was growing rapidly; he was clever, had read deeply, and was fast coming to the front. He could afford to marry, provided his wife were "an helpmeet," and not an expensive fashionable ornament. An helpmeet indeed he knew Natalie would be.

"Give it up, my darling, at the end of the month, and come home and nurse me," he said.

But Natalie shook her head, and looking at him with her dark true eyes, implored—

"Don't ask me, Edward. It will be time enough two years hence, when I shall have learned something, and earned the satisfaction of knowing a little, and doing

a little. Why, I have grown to be totally ashamed of myself. I am such a know-nothing compared with you."

"Nonsense, Natalie! I hate the idea of a learned wife. I want you just as you are."

"But I shall not be learned, nor other than I am now. I shall only be more capable, more useful, more able to understand and help you in your profession, more at one with you every way."

"Perfect nonsense!" exclaimed the unreasoning lover.

"No, Edward, it is truth. My education has been very shallow and superficial—what does it amount to? A little painting, a little music, a smattering of languages. How long would that last you, my master?" said she, rallying him out of his frown with charming vivacity. Why, you would get tired of me in a year or two, and I should soon be in the list of tolerated wives. No, Doctor, I can never be entirely equal with you except in one thing, but at least I can bring myself much nearer you in the experience of life I shall get in these wards. Had I been as determined to do my duty some months ago as I am now, my mother had not died, and I would have never been a raving maniac."

"For Heaven's sake, Natalie! my darling!" cried Dr Arbuckle—for over her face swept a shadow, a sternness he had never before seen. Presently it vanished, and the pure face was again lit up as she looked at him.

"You are not angry? You see I am right?" she said softly.

"Angry? No, oh, no! And, of course, I must confess that, strictly speaking, you may be right. But—"

"But what?"

"Oh, well, never mind! But you said you were equal to me in one thing. What is that one thing?"

Natalie's pale cheeks flushed swiftly, and her eyes shone with soft fire as she answered him—

"Don't you know? cannot you guess? Then I must wait for time to prove it to you."

"Ah!" was the Doctor's sudden, glad exclamation as her meaning flashed upon him. "Equal in love!" And in the joy of his heart he threw out his arms to embrace her, but with an arch smile and a mute kiss thrown to him from her small finger tips she vanished through the door of the room, nor did he set eyes on her again until half an hour afterward, when, at the end of a long ward, he saw her holding a feeding-cup, while she tenderly raised the head of a poor sick lad to give him a drink.

"Let her alone, Doctor, she is right," said Miss Stobie that afternoon, when he was pressing her to use her influence to get Natalie to give up her project. "Let her alone. Some day you will be thankful for all this. You do not know what she suffered long before it came to the end. There are some debts, too—tradesmen's bills—which were owing at the time of her mother's death, and these she is determined to pay. It will take a long time, but she is determined to do it. She says she could never respect herself unless she had paid with her own money the food she has eaten. She has extreme notions; she says she would consider herself a thief if she didn't."

"Tchick! tchick! she is too sensitive. Why, of course, I'll pay all these things that worry her so, myself."

"Not if you are a wise man. Let Natalie alone—she will work out her own salvation all right, and be the

better and stronger for it, too. She loves you, and that is her chief motive power, the source of her strength."

"Who bore Mrs Wyngate's funeral expenses?" he asked, suddenly.

"The 'Ladies Benevolent Society.' Ah! that also is one of the debts she considers herself bound to discharge, although surely Dr Bruno might have spared enough out of his own private pocket to have buried the poor lady. He ruined them utterly, which, I suppose you know."

"No, Miss Stobie, I never understood how that all happened. Then they had means enough originally?"

"Most certainly. Why! is it possible you do not know how Mrs Wyngate was induced to give up the whole of her little fortune into Bruno's hands for investment, and that she died waiting for his dividends?"

"Bless my soul, no! They are touting these shares of Bruno's yet. Tell me all about it?"

Dr Arbuckle had been resting in Miss Stobie's comfortable easy-chair during this colloquy; but now he suddenly sat upright in order to listen to the lady's narration of Dr Bruno's speculation and its result. His brow knitted, his lips set firmly, after a fashion of their own, and his decided chin seemed to square itself as he listened.

"The infernal rascal," he exclaimed, but immediately he apologised, saying—"I beg your pardon, Miss Stobie, I forgot I was in the presence of a lady. But, upon my word, if you were not present I should feel like repeating it."

"Do so, by all means, if it will help the matter any. I assure you you have exactly voiced my opinion of Dr Bruno." The cautious Miss Stobie knew to whom she

was speaking, and relaxed her usual reticence accordingly.

That evening the door-bell of Dr Bruno's residence was rung somewhat sharply, and on the visitor being ushered into the drawing-room he sent up his card—*Edward Arbuckle, M.D.*

Dr Bruno, big, bland, and ruddy from recent dining, entered the drawing-room almost immediately, and proffered his flabby white hand.

"Very glad to see you, Doctor. Always glad to make the acquaintance of medical men, so long as it's not professionally—eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is certainly not a professional visit," said Dr Arbuckle with a grim smile; "in fact, I came on business to-night. The 'Eureka Mine,' are you still connected with it?—still selling shares?"

"Still selling," replied Dr Bruno, pleasantly.

"Well, honestly now, of course—one always likes to be sure before investing; and, as this interview is strictly private, is the thing paying or likely to pay?"

"Bless my soul! what a question! Why, we have only to dispose of the remaining shares in order to get millions out of it."

"Indeed! Well, I am extremely glad to hear that. But it's a risky thing investing."

"Never invest where you have doubts, sir."

"Oh, I don't mean that. What I mean is—supposing some unforeseen calamity should happen necessitating the immediate use of the money I had invested—say some thousands of dollars, in such a contingency could I withdraw or sell out my shares?"

"In such an unforeseen contingency, my dear sir, I should buy them up myself," said Dr Bruno, leaning back in an easy attitude, with one leg thrown across the other, his elbows on the chair arms, and the tips of his forefingers meeting and forming an arch, over which he looked triumphantly at this cautious questioner.

"Pardon *mé*, Dr Bruno! My doubts of the worth of the shares are at rest now and for ever. But it would be too much for me to expect you to buy them personally—"

"I am quite prepared, as I told you before," rejoined the Doctor, blandly, but with just the slightest sensation of pique at having been doubted at all.

"Then we may as well proceed to business at once," said Dr Arbuckle, taking out his large pocket-book and beginning to look for a certain paper he wanted.

"Ah! excuse me," cried Dr Bruno, gaily, as he bounded to his feet and went towards the door. "I'll just bring in pens, ink, and paper, and then we'll see how many shares you can take."

It must be confessed that Dr Arbuckle's healthy countenance was considerably paler than when he entered the room, and though his lips were set, and his nostrils slightly dilated, a keen observer could have noted an occasional nervous tremor of the hands as he produced the paper.

"Ah! how much do you propose to invest?" asked the good Doctor placing a handsome gold-mounted inkstand upon a fancifully draped table.

"I do not propose to invest one cent," answered Dr Arbuckle, in a ringing tone. His hands were quite steady now as he held the paper and looked at Dr Bruno,

whose heavy underlip had fallen suddenly. "I have come here to-night to make inquiries respecting this speculation of yours, and find according to your own statement, that there are millions in it. Also, that you yourself are willing to buy up the shares of those who may wish to sell out. I am here on behalf of Miss Wyngate, daughter of Mrs Wyngate, whom you allowed to starve to death, and whose money you still hold knowing her to be a dependent on public bounty. You say you are prepared. It is well—for I demand restitution of the whole sum hazarded—ninety-five thousand dollars."

Dr Bruno sank into the chair behind him, trembling in every limb, and grey as death.

"What! What did you say?" he gasped, wildly.

"You heard me perfectly well. Yes, or no?"

"I don't understand sir, why you—"

"I have no time to waste, Bruno. Either sign that paper authorising Miss Wyngate to draw on your banker for the sum mentioned there; (we'll let you off without interest, though you don't deserve it), or say no at once—for in that case my horse is at the door waiting to drive me to—George Ross, Q.C.—whom, perhaps, you may have heard of."

Dr Bruno, who had begun to recover from the first shock he had received, winced visibly at the mention of this eminent lawyer's name. Ross! Good Heavens! His life-long enemy! The man who had called him an oily hypocrite to his face, who had warned several against buying "Eureka Shares" when they originally "boomed!" What had he ever done that he should be made the victim of George Ross, Q.C.? For *he* was one

who would have no mercy on a transaction of this kind. He was one of those men, hard-headed and unimaginative, who, having never experienced religion as had the good doctor himself, refused to believe in its existence in any soul unless manifested unmistakably in the life. Already he fancied he heard his blunt laugh of derision as he cross-examined and held him up, like a beetle on a pin, to public scorn.

The very thought was torture. Where could he turn? whither flee? The death of Mrs Wyngate was even yet spoken of with horror, though no one dreamed that he had been the direct cause. What would it be when it was proclaimed in open court, in all the daily papers, that she had written imploring him for money, but that he had evaded her appeal for help, and allowed her to be buried by organised charity! The curses, the imprecations of the unthinking, unreasoning mob that would be heaped upon him!—the ruin that would follow!—ah—the ruin!—yes, he must consider that. It was a big sum—the entire sum Mrs Wyngate had given him—but its restitution would save him from ruin and disgrace.

Such were the thoughts that flashed through his mind as he stood greyly regarding the note which Dr Arbuckle, with resolute thumb and forefinger, held pinned to the table before him.

“And supposing I sign this?” he faltered, huskily.

“It means escape from to-morrow’s exposure, disgrace, and ruin. It means so much less to answer for at the day of judgment, although I doubt if compulsory restitution will count any in your favour there. Come—yes or no? It’s nothing to me, but everything to you. I give you another minute to decide—no more.”

So saying, Dr Arbuckle pulled out his watch; but as he saw Dr Bruno's large white hand reach out and tremblingly take hold of a pen, he forgot to count the seconds, and a dew broke out on his own temples. For Natalie's sake, and unknown to her, he had played a bold game and won. His hand shook slightly as he folded the paper and carefully replaced it in the pocket-book.

"You will think of me as charitably as you can in connection with this affair, Dr Arbuckle," said Dr Bruno, humbly; "and I trust, now that I have done my duty in honourably returning the money, it will be for ever a private concern between us."

Dr Arbuckle, who was buttoning up his overcoat, bowed gravely.

Dr Bruno held out his hand, but, totally ignoring it Edward Arbuckle, an appeased Nemesis, bowed again and stalked out of the room, out of the outer door, and running down the steps gathered up the reins, and leaped into his phaeton.

"Touch *his* hand! No, indeed. Ugh! there's blood on it! and Mrs Wyngate's won't be the last either."

CHAPTER IX.

NATALIE'S RESOLUTION STRENGTHENED.

Next morning Dr Arbuckle called at the National Bank at a quarter-past ten punctually.

"Is Mr M'Leod down yet?" he inquired at one of the tellers.

"Yes, sir. Just step round to his private office and you'll find him there."

"Oh, how d'ye do, Arbuckle? Glad to see you. Sit down," said the banker, who was one of the Doctor's friends.

"Haven't a minute to spare. I went to the Club last night in hope of finding you there; but I couldn't see you."

"I wasn't out last night; we had some friends up to the house. What's business this morning?"

Dr Arbuckle silently took out his pocket-book, and unfolded the note which Dr Bruno had signed the previous evening.

"How's that for high?" he asked, with an air of peculiar triumph.

The banker, a slender, alert, rather distinguished-looking man of about the Doctor's own age, took up the paper, and rapidly glanced over the contents.

"Whee-ee-ew!" was his significant but noncommittal comment.

"Can you oblige me by making this transfer at once?" asked the Doctor.

"Certainly, if you wish it. But, I say, Arbuckle?"

"Say on."

"Dr Bruno is one of our customers—eh?"

Dr Arbuckle nodded assent.

"But I'd give ten dollars to know how you managed to get this out of him," continued the banker, with a significant smile.

"And I'd give the same amount to be at liberty to tell you, M'Leod," was the merry retort.

The banker touched a gong on the table, and a clerk appeared.

"Tell Mr Watson that Miss Wyngate opens an account with the bank—the deposit being ninety-five thousand dollars, transferred from Dr Bruno's account. Let it be done at once, and bring me Miss Wyngate's bank-book as soon as possible."

"Arbuckle, you are a brick!" exclaimed Mr M'Leod, when they were left alone together; "you must have brought heavy pressure to bear on Bruno."

"Yes—rather."

The two men looked in each other's eyes a minute, smiled mutely and then began to talk of everything but the subject uppermost in both minds. In a little the clerk returned with the book, the transaction was an accomplished fact, and Dr Arbuckle took the shortest cut to the hospital.

"Look here, Miss Stobie—I won't detain you a moment," said he, when he had arrived, and tapped at the door of the nurse's headquarters.

"Will you please give Miss Wyngate this bank-book, with my compliments?"

Miss Stobie took the book and seeing Miss Wyngate's

name on the back, she shut the door and motioned the Doctor to a seat.

"Why, Dr Arbuckle! what have you been about? Will you ever understand Natalie? Do you think for one moment that she would accept money from you?"

"She will accept that all right," said the smiling Doctor. "Open it and see."

Miss Stobie opened the book and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Where on earth—what does this mean?" she asked, looking up in amazement.

"It means that I've bullied Dr Bruno out of that money he wheedled from poor Mrs Wyngate. Every cent of it too."

"Dr Arbuckle!—is it possible? How did you do? Did Natalie authorise you?"

"Not she; she knows nothing of whatever of it. By Jove! I nearly forgot the sum you told me, but I risked it, for if I hadn't gone on the spur of the moment, I could never have carried it through. But it's easy scaring a guilty conscience. I threatened him with a prosecution for fraud, conducted by Ross, and that brought him to time."

"Well! well! wonders will never cease. And now I suppose you will expect her to give up nursing."

"If I can persuade her."

"Don't try it, Doctor. Have patience with her, she is happiest when working. Have you doctors no delight in your profession apart from its financial aspect?"

The Doctor laughed shortly.

"If we didn't, who would be a doctor? Not I for one. Oh, yes, I believe in and love my profession. But

that has nothing to do with this question. It is not necessary that a doctor's wife should be a nurse, is it?"

"No, but I don't think it any hurt for a doctor's or anybody else's wife to feel that they have been able to live an able, helpful life, independently for themselves, previous to marriage. Such an one will make all the better an helpmeet for the man she marries."

"I shall try to persuade her all the same," said the wilful Doctor with a smile.

"You won't be able, sir," laughed Miss Stobie.

The Doctor found she was right. Natalie was proud of the determination and strength which had so cleverly wrested from Dr Bruno the fortune she had given up as lost. All women admire determination and courage. The joy the money afforded her was such that she was fain to relieve herself, when in secret, of a few tears over it; it was surely too good to be true—that she would be able to pay these debts, the thought of which weighed her spirits down and humbled her to the very dust. To pay them now, at once, without waiting for her small monthly nurse's wages to accumulate to the necessary amount. To be able also, here and now, to reimburse with interest all that the Ladies' Society had so generously and delicately bestowed, to refund bountifully the Christian charity which had provided her mother with respectable Christian burial. In her gratitude to her lover for this good deed he had done, she almost felt tempted to yield to his importunities, break her resolution, and marry him now, as he desired. But with a shuddering glance at the past she again clung to her purpose.

"He is so good—he loves me so—that he does not

see; he has no idea how ignorant and helpless I am. As I am, I would be a hindrance not a help to him. Mamma knew enough of housekeeping to manage her servants, but I could not even do that properly. And when I fail, and everything is bungled, he is so kind, so big-hearted, that he would pity me, and pretend it was all right, when it was all wrong—and I couldn't—oh! I couldn't bear it. No, when I come to you, my love, my master, I shall be no drag upon you, you shall be able to respect as well as love me. People shall not pity Dr Arbuckle because of his silly, helpless, lady wife, for I shall be able to keep house, nurse him, and any others who may be sick. I shall be none the less a lady in being first a capable woman." So Natalie reasoned with herself, and so, but in other words, she reasoned with her lover. And he, man like, could not see that it was her love for, and her pride in him, that helped her to hold her own against him.

"I am only learning to live, Edward," she urged, "it is so blessed to feel one's self of some use. I am so happy that sometimes I dread lest it should suddenly come to an end. Don't ask me to go back to the dependent know-nothing, do-nothing existence. I couldn't bear it."

"Natalie! could you not bear to be dependent on me?"

"Ah, yes! yes! I am dependent on you now, and it is life to me to be so. But, oh, Edward! I have grown greedy—I want the work and you too. I want my life to be full—full to the brim, and overflowing, as it is now. I love you too well to marry you yet."

CHAPTER X.

MRS TRANENT'S DETERMINATION.

MRS Tranent was somewhat piqued. She couldn't understand how it was, but it was certain she was making no headway in her intimacy with Dr Edward Arbuckle. In the first of their acquaintance their friendship appeared to be growing gradually and pleasantly; he had called regularly, professionally when necessary, and as often non-professionally. The interest—the almost fatherly interest—he had taken in Freddie, proved his interest in herself, and she had spared no pains to make herself attractive and her house homelike to him. Of late, however, a subtle, indefinable change had come over the Doctor—a change she felt, but could not account for. Once or twice she had sent for him to prescribe for herself, but her splendid health was too apparent to keep up the pretext of nervousness, and his excuse of being kept too busy for the discharge of society obligations was too flimsy for Mrs Tranent. She was quite out of patience when she considered that she had helped to make him the busy man he now was, and that after all he should spend the little leisure he had elsewhere than at the Larches. She regretted now that she had allowed him to turn her from her purpose of sending Freddie away, for there was no use mincing matters, he was a boy who needed a deal of looking after; an ubiquitous incarnate spirit of mischief.

Before long, however, Freddie proved to her that he was good for something, inasmuch as he had managed to bring Dr Arbuckle to The Larches every day for the last few weeks successively. And this is how he unintentionally did it :—

The Ladies' Benevolent Society had each given a grand parlour social—admittance twenty-five cents—the proceeds of which went to the funds of the society, which were considerably augmented thereby. The whole house on these occasions was thrown open to all sects and denominations, dainty and delicate refreshments were provided by the mistress of the house, and the best amateur and sometimes professional talent, musical and literary, was secured to help “the feast of reason and the flow of soul.”

It had now come to Mrs Tranent's turn to entertain the church people, and she and her servants had been busy all the week preparing for the parlour social. It had been quite a success so far, and she had made a charming hostess.

Dr Edward Arbuckle was present among others, looking slightly bored it must be confessed, and Mrs Tranent had throughout the evening introduced him to Dr Bruno, when both gentlemen had bowed profoundly, and, to Mrs Tranent's surprise, walked off in different directions soon afterwards. To tell the truth Dr Bruno had come with the intention of broaching the subject of the “Eureka Mine” to Mrs Tranent, but this introduction had suddenly decided him otherwise. While the guests were taking advantage of some fine classical music being played to plunge into promiscuous conversation—making a sort of buzz accompaniment not in the

original sonata—Freddie seized the opportunity of sideling up to his mother and asking if he could make a wax-work in the garden, he and several other small boys who had come with their parents.

"A wax-work, Freddie? How, my dear?" asked Mrs Tranent, sweetly.

"Oh, you know, we just take jackets and hats and things and dress up the bushes and the little trees with them and call 'em wax figures. It's immense! just howling!"

"'Sh—'sh! don't talk so loud, Freddie. Well—yes. I suppose you may. Tell Nicol to let you have a few things." Mrs Tranent was glad that her son had hit on such a bright idea to keep himself and others out of mischief, and full of his glorious project, Freddie left the crowded room. Presently, however, Nicol, with a troubled look on her face, threaded her way demurely through the visitors to where Mrs Tranent sat fanning herself and talking to Dr Bruno.

"Please 'um, Master Freddie says—"

"Yes, yes, Nicol. It's all right; let him have what he wants; it won't hurt the things," said Mrs Tranent, quickly, little dreaming what Freddie had demanded, and Nicol, dumb with surprise and dismay, departed to obey.

During the next half-hour a busy and exciting scene was going on in the garden and little shrubbery around it. The cloak-room had been well nigh emptied of the visitors' wraps, caps, and bonnets, and in these the bushes and saplings had been fantastically dressed by the enterprising and ingenuous youngsters. Here a young fir stood arrayed in a magnificent India shawl

and widow's bonnet, the long veil hanging dolorously down in front. Here stood Dr Bruno, as represented by his light overcoat and tall silk hat, with his back to the path; and farther on a light boating shawl enfolded a plaster statue of Diana, who was crowned with a smart fashionable hat with a scarlet wing in it, her long white limbs incongruously appearing under the shawl fringe from the knee downward. In this way some twenty or more of the bushes were decorated, and the boys were enjoying themselves hugely when one asked Freddie if he had a velocipede. Freddie somewhat sadly replied that he hadn't, but that he could ride faster than any fellow present on one for all that, seeing he had practised on another fellow's away at the other end of the town all summer. To prove the truth of his assertion he then and there challenged any boy present who had a bicycle to bring it there and he would show them a thing or two. The challenge was instantly accepted by a boy who lived a few doors off, and a bicycle race along the moonlight garden paths was next in order, Freddie coming off victorious. Boys are generous of praise where it is deserved, and Freddie got no stint of it. So elated did he become that he bet ten cents with any fellow present that he could ride the bicycle downstairs. The bet was accepted with acclamation; Freddie ran in and borrowed ten cents from the cook; the stakes were put up, an umpire chosen, and while the chief singers of the church choir were rendering a sacred piece, Freddie, the velocipede, and a boy to hold 't while he got fixed on, softly ascended the carpeted stairs, leaving the rest of the lads below to watch Freddie's marvellous descent and mentally note how it could be done. They were never able afterwards to

tell. All they remembered was Freddie fixed properly on top of the velocipede, a warning cry of "Watch out, you fellows there," from Freddie, as he set the wheel in motion, then a confused flash and tumble, in which wheels, legs, arms, went revolving indiscriminately, and Freddie, bleeding at the nose and yelling at the top of his voice, lay at the bottom of the stairs with the smashed locomotive on top of him.

The accident brought the social to a sudden close, for on lifting him up Dr Arbuckle found that Freddie's leg was broken, as well as his head smashed. Soon, however, the polite expressions of pity were changed to the wildest ejaculations of consternation, when, reaching the cloak-room, the ladies found that the most of their wraps had disappeared, although the stampede to the garden when the boyish trick was discovered, was to the young people one of the most enjoyable episodes of the evening.

During the following weeks, in which Dr Arbuckle daily visited his amusing young patient, Mrs Tranent found it comparatively easy to forgive Freddie for the extra care and trouble he caused. And yet, though the Doctor came daily, and spent considerable time talking with her son, who had grown to worship him, Mrs Tranent was far from satisfied.

Though courteous and urbane as ever, he no longer stayed as before to talk with herself. The little confidential chats that had begun so auspiciously had without cause come to an end, and plan as she might she could not revive them. She had grown slightly thinner than her wont, and when the Doctor did not call at his usual hour, she wandered up and down the richly furnished house restless and unhappy. She dressed herself with

scrupulous care, and threw into her really fine manner all the added grace she could borrow, but more and more she felt the shadow which had come between them. He was not unhappy; nay, he looked pleasanter and happier than ever, with the pleasant, satisfied expression of a prosperous man. What was it? She had never done or said anything which could in any way be construed into undue familiarity, and, moreover, she knew for certain that nothing derogatory to her life or disposition could have reached him from outside.

She was wretched.

“Have I offended you in any way, Doctor?” she asked in desperation, one day when his manner had been particularly reticent.

“Offended *me*, Mrs Tranent? What a question! How could you possibly offend me? You who have always been so ——. Bless me! What a notion!”

Mrs Tranent laughed uneasily.

“Well, that’s why I ask. I was not aware of anything I had done to cause such a change in your demeanour. You used to be so frank and hearty and outspoken, telling me all your plans for the future, and so forth; but now, you always strike me as being distant and reserved. I really thought I had offended you.”

“Then, please, don’t think so any more, Mrs Tranent. Some day,” he said, “perhaps I shall tell you what is occupying my thoughts.” And, as he spoke, he looked up into her face with a smile of entire content. He was thinking of Natalie, and how some day he would give Mrs Tranent such a pleasant surprise when he told her of their engagement. He did not see how—misunderstanding his words and manner—she had flushed crimson

and faded pale with the intensity of the relief his words afforded her; but he looked at her again, and noting a slight deterioration in her looks, he took out his pocket-book, and wrote out a prescription, saying, as he gave it her—

“Take a spoonful of this tonic three times a day after meals. You look as if you needed it.”

So saying, he took up his hat, shook hands with her genially, and passed out.

Mrs Tranent looked at the prescription, laughed hysterically and with sudden passion tore it to pieces and threw it from her.

“A tonic indeed! medicine forsooth! Is the man blind, or does he think I am a stone? Oh, the mole!—the bat! Oh, Edward, Edward!”—and the lady buried her head in the sofa cushions, and wept bitterly.

When Nicol entered the room about an hour afterward, her mistress was sitting by the window, her elbow on the window-sill, and her chin resting upon her hand. All traces of tears were gone; but she was pale, and her lips set firmly. She was evidently thinking deeply; and when, after a time, she rose and shook down her soft draperies, she murmured to herself, “Yes, I will tell him!”

CHAPTER IX.

AN OLD SWEETHEART TO THE FORE.

On his way home from The Larches the Doctor began to reflect on what Mrs Tranent had said concerning the change she fancied she saw in him, for of course, he argued, it was only fancy. Still, when he came to think of it, he had *not* gone there of late in a social way so frequently as he had done on their first acquaintance, when he had more time.

It did not, after all, look well to slight the lady who had so disinterestedly introduced him to families, excellent paying patients, whose money might easily have been diverted into other channels, but the fact was, he had not been aware of the extent of his carelessness until she had pointed it out to him.

But changed in his manner—no!—absurd!

He had always thought Mrs Tranent a fine looking woman—a smart respect-compelling woman, with not a fault that he could see, save in that she was not so—well—motherly to Freddie as she might be. However, he would now make amends; he would send a card as soon as he got home, inviting himself to tea in the old familiar way, and in the old familiar chitchat conversations he would tell her what had befallen him; of the blessing which had crowned his life in the love of Natalie Wyngate. He would ask her to go and call upon his affianced wife; for, after all—and here he smiled a con-

tented, blissful smile—after all—it was possible he may have been thinking of her so much of late as to exclude all thought of social obligation.

Mrs Tranent's colour changed a little when she read the Doctor's apologetic note inviting himself, and for some moments she sat lost in thought.

Then she clasped her white jewelled fingers tightly together, and muttered—

“Shall I, or shall I not? To think he never once recognised me; and I, who thought him dead, knew him at once!”

Mrs Tranent always spent a full hour at her toilet, and really when she emerged from her dressing-room it did not appear that the time was altogether wasted, seeing the result was so pleasing to the eye. But this evening it was not one but two hours she spent before her mirror, and then she left it dissatisfied. Not that she had been dressing all the time—she never had taken less time to dress—but the minutes—five, ten, twenty at a time she had consumed in pacing up and down, in sitting down and rising up again in an agony of doubt and indecision.

“Shall I, or shall I not?” was the burden of her thoughts. “What will he say? How will he take it? will he remember?—ah! will he remember?”

At last her indecision came to an end. Mrs Tranent was a woman of will and purpose, and could execute, once she had made up her mind.

Calm, smiling, unruffled, she came down and welcomed the Doctor saying—

“I am so glad you thought of coming. I wanted to say something private to-night, so we'll have tea served in the little study.”

The little study was a kind of small library, æsthetically and appropriately furnished as though Oscar Wilde himself had superintended the appointment thereof; and its one bay window looked out into the green glooms of a beautiful ravine that sloped down from the back of The Larches. Into this room Mrs Tranent led the way. The tea was already set when they entered, and the Doctor uttered an exclamation of delighted surprise as he stepped to the window and looked out.

"Why, Mrs Tranent! how is it you never showed me this most beautiful spot. I had no idea you had a window in The Larches which commanded such a view. What exquisite colouring in yon rocks over yonder! What glorious maples! What sombre pines!"

"You like it, then?" asked Mrs Tranent.

"Like it? It is simply glorious. One feels like getting out and walking along the tree tops. These children away below there, they look like fairies or butterflies dancing about on the edge of the brook. If I lived here I should never leave this window. I suppose you spend most of your time here?"

"I—no, not I. I used to think it horrid, and thought of getting a fence put to shut out the sight of these ugly rocks over there. I wonder when I hear people raving about the ravine. Why, a woman committed suicide away up there a little while ago—threw herself right over."

Mrs Tranent was candour itself. The doctor felt that, and he turned to the tea-table thinking there was no accounting for tastes. He must bring Natalie some day to see this magnificent ravine—*she* would appreciate its wild beauty.

Never before had Mrs Tranent appeared to such advantage as she did this soft autumn evening sitting in the window recess, with her fair profile thrown out against the dark wildness of the glen. It was a picture the Doctor remembered long afterward. Slightly paler, slightly thinner, her soft flaxen curls falling lightly over her brow, her face firm, yet full of suppressed feeling, she sat rocking herself softly with her white hands resting on the chair arms.

Tea was over, and the Doctor was entertaining her with some city news he had heard, when Mrs Tranent, holding out her right hand, on which was but one ring, with one or two small coloured stones set in it, said easily—

“Did you ever see a ring like that before, Doctor?”

The Doctor examined the ring carefully before answering.

“No—I cannot say I have. Is there anything peculiar about it?”

“Well, no—except that it was a ring which was given to me once. I have kept it now for over twelve years.”

Mrs Tranent's gaze was fixed on the Doctor's as she spoke, but a shadow of disappointment clouded her keen blue eyes when he carelessly replied—

“Oh, indeed! You value it then, I suppose.”

“It was given originally to a person—a young person called Hetty—a barmaid in a hotel,” answered Mrs Tranent, with an imperceptible gasp and a growing pallor.

The Doctor looked mildly interested, and again lifted her hand and looked at the ring.

“Ah, then! it has some peculiar history?” he inquired

genially and with the air of a man trying to be agreeable to a lady. Again the shadow of disappointment deepened in the lady's eyes. So deeply disappointed was she, that the angry blood rose to cheek and brow.

"You don't remember the name? You never heard it before?" she asked tensely, evidently suppressing some strong feeling.

The Doctor shook his head and politely considered a little.

"N—no—I cannot say I have. Hetty—Hetty! It seems like a dream to me—wait a little—Hetty—I surely have heard the name before, but I can't think where. Why?—who was this Hetty?"

Mrs Tranent had leant back in her chair, an outspread fan before her face. Her hand shook, her lip quivered, her bosom heaved, but she would not allow herself to give way:

"Excuse me for one moment," she said, rising hastily and leaving the room. Closing the door behind her, she dashed into the drawing-room and threw herself on her knees before a lounge, and buried her face in the cushions. "Oh! oh! oh!" she moaned, "forgotten! utterly forgotten! not even my name remembered! Shall I tell him? No, I won't! If he has forgotten me, let him; he shall love Mrs Tranent independent of Hetty." So she vowed, with returning resolution, as she returned to the study—but it was too late.

Dr Arbuckle, left to himself for a few minutes, fell to ruminating over the name.

"Great heavens! Hetty, the barmaid, my old sweetheart," he cried aloud, in the first wild moment of surprise; for the closed doors of memory had suddenly

sprung open as if touched by a spring, and with lightning vividness she saw Hetty--Hetty to whom he had just given a ring--weeping in a corner, and he himself, an impulsive lad, comforting her, but leaving her forever.

One glance at his face, as she entered again, told the lady that her guest had suddenly remembered all; but the look of wonder in his eyes was not yet one of recognition.

"Why, Mrs Tranent!" he exclaimed, with a laugh, "that ring must be mine, then. I remember giving a ring to a girl once when I was but a lad—one of those foolish, those idiotic things that young lads *will* do, while meaning nothing. How did *you* come by it? Where is poor Hetty now, do you know?"

Mrs Tranent could not answer him. It was more than she could bear to hear herself, her past self, spoken of in this light way, as though she was not now the same being.

That the Doctor spoke in all honesty, not suspecting her identity, did not comfort her any. She had tried to reveal herself in order to draw him to her by the memory of that youthful episode. So far as she could see now it had but driven them farther apart. But it was too late now to retract. What should she say? With a sudden impulse she turned to where he stood, and laying a hand boldly on each shoulder while her eyes swam in tears she could no longer repress, she exclaimed, desperately—

"Dr Arbuckle!—Edward!—my old sweetheart!—do you not see? I am Hetty!"

"You! you Hetty!" he cried, drawing back and looking at the lady before him in doubt and perplexity; but as he looked memory again woke, and with it conviction and recognition.

"Is it possible!—yes, it is Hetty—but you are so changed—your hair was dark brown and——"

"A chemical wash will work wonders, Doctor. I prefer flaxen hair, and then, of course, I have grown very stout," she said ruefully.

"And very handsome," rejoined the Doctor, gallantly. "Upon my word, Hetty, this is the greatest surprise of my life. And yet, do you know, the first time I saw you, the first two or three times indeed, I was struck by your resemblance to some memory, I could not tell what. You see I had quite forgotten, as no doubt you did also, that silly boy and girl affair."

"Oh, of course, I had forgotten too, until I saw you again, but I knew you from the first. That is why I interested myself so in your success," said Mrs Tranent, who had quite recovered herself, and was now rocking calmly in the chair by the window.

The idea of Hetty, the barmaid, patronising him, Dr Edward Arbuckle, sent a strange thrill of rebellion through him; he suddenly drew up with dignified *hateur* as the question flashed upon him—how came she here in such a position?

"Of course, Mrs Tranent, it was not only the change in your personal appearance, there was also the change of circumstances. You are now wealthy, educated, a lady recognised in society. Of course you can explain all that, but you must see how it mystifies one who knows nothing about it."

"There is no mystery about it, Doctor," she said, quickly, feeling the chill in his voice; "there is far more mystery about you than about me, I assure you. I was left a fortune by an uncle, who died in Brazil,

and then I married the hotel-keeper, who, to do him justice, had wanted to marry me before that. Then we sold out and went abroad. I knew I could not enter society without education, so I studied under good masters, stayed in the Loretto Convent for some months to be trained in society manners—it's all a matter of imitation and practice. Then I ought The Larches, a little before my husband's death—he died—and here we are, Freddie and I."

As she ceased she rose, and unlocking the drawer of an escritoire she drew out a yellow letter, dated some twelve years back, and presented it to Dr Arbuckle.

"What is this?" he asked, wondering.

"Read, and you will see."

The Doctor opened the letter and read. It was the solicitor's letter she had received, advising her that she had been left heiress to her uncle, who had just died in Brazil.

"I would have believed you, Mrs Tranent," said the Doctor, in apologetic tone.

"Perhaps so, but it is better you should have other proof than my word," she replied, with a tinge of bitterness. "As for my character here, I have taken good care that the barmaid should hold her own as to that at least."

"You do your education and your fortune credit, Mrs Tranent—'Hetty'—I feel like saying, for old sake's sake. Believe me I am glad—exceedingly glad—you have been so fortunate. Few women could have carried a full cup so well as you have done. I am sorry your husband did not live longer to enjoy it with you."

A quick, impatient jerk of her fan was all the answer

vouchsafed to the Doctor's regret for her widowhood.

"Why did you not tell me of this before?" queried the Doctor, after a pause.

"I don't know," laughed the lady. "I thought I would let you find out—but when I saw you so blind, it struck me I ought to enlighten you."

"Dear me—now I think of it, I have so much to ask you—did you ever hear of Ramsay after I left? I went to Ceylon first, and wrote to him repeatedly from Australia, but got my letters all returned from the Dead-Letter Office."

"He was dead—that's why," replied Mrs Tranent, who had suddenly turned pale as a sheet.

"Dead! Frank Ramsay dead! Poor fellow! and I had been blaming him for not writing, and—but when did he die? and where?"

"He was found dead in his bed," was the answer, given in a low husky tone. "Please don't ask me any more, Doctor. It always upsets me when I think of it."

After the Doctor had taken his departure Mrs Tranent paced up and down the drawing-room carpet.

"What have I gained? Nothing. He is as far from me as ever. He is too frank—too courteous; he is blind and deaf and stupid; and he calls me Hetty for old sake's sake, as cool as a cucumber! Does the man think me a stone? And yet sometimes I think he does care a little; I must allow for the surprise. But, anyhow, I have still my trump card left. That will fetch him. Oh, my God!" she exclaimed, suddenly; and shuddering, she covered her face with her hands, as though to shut out some vision that had sprung up out of the terrible past.

CHAPTER XII.

DURING COURTSHIP.

IT would be idle to deny that Dr Arbuckle had got a shock in the discovery he had made. That Mrs Tranent, the stylish, wealthy widow, recognised by the Church and society, should have turned out to be Hetty, the barmaid of the Royal Arms, in the little town on the Clyde, was something no man could have been prepared for. And that she, of all people—she with whom he had flirted in those days of adolescence, as adolescent fools will flirt, should have been the one to introduce him to a successful society practice, was a still more remarkable turn of Fortune's wheel.

Still, it could not be denied that she must have been a clever, capable woman to have educated herself, and held her own in society circles as she had so blamelessly done. She was certainly a woman of great ambition, and one whom, the Doctor felt, he could in no way despise. One thing he was glad of—he was glad she had so soon got over the ephemeral liking she had for him in these old days, for she must have married her master that very year. Sensible girl she must have been, as sensible indeed as she was now. He must tell Natalie of this discovery he had made—h—m—no! Better not, perhaps, perhaps. Few men like to tell their affianced wives of past flirtations, and Dr Arbuckle was but a man obeying a man's instincts. He had thought of taking Natalie down with him some day to call on Mrs

Tranent, introducing her as his future bride—but now—well—no. As well not, perhaps. On the whole, it was not quite to his liking, this discovery; he would rather Mrs Tranent, his fine-looking wealthy patient, had been anybody else than Hetty. However, there was no making her otherwise now—he must simply do his duty professionally as before, and as before call upon her occasionally.

But Ramsay, poor Ramsay! whom he had left so well and hearty, who had wished him *bon voyage* that night before they slept. Dear, dear! To think all these years, while he himself had been studying and struggling, ardently pressing forward for a share of the world's wealth; to think his old fellow-student should, unknown to him, have long since left it all; should all these years have been an inhabitant of the land of spirits—the great and mysterious Unseen! How much wiser was he than himself to-day! What had he found there within that awful impenetrable veil before which Science herself stands baffled, impotent, with no weapon keen enough to pierce the darkness that appals?

Was it eternal sleep? or, what he had always argued for, founding his argument on the doctrine of evolution, eternal progress? Had he, a man, made a little lower than the angels, by leaving the clay that bound him to earth, soared to an angel's plane of thought and vision, become a spirit pure? He hoped so—he trusted so—it must be so—else why this instinctive straining ever forward toward a fairer future, a higher state of being? Dr Arbuckle found he could not subscribe to the petty details of creeds, but he was no unbeliever. On the contrary, he wondered how, in the face of the dread

realities of life which they daily encountered, men could live, believing there was no God, no great sustainer of trusting souls.

"No God!" he had exclaimed once when younger than he was now, "why man, it seems to me that the prayers, the agonies, the cries that have gone wailing up from the lips of humanity from the beginning of time were enough to have called into being the God yearned after. Natural instincts, you say, are true and unerring. What does the natural instinct of prayer mean?"

It was but a young man's crude protest against the atheistic tenets held by some of his fellow-students, but it was the cry of a soul that could not live without belief in a supreme, sympathetic Spirit. For some years past he had let the world wag, holding himself aloof from all religious speculations whatever. He had weighed the matter well, and had come to a final conclusion: "We are not all dust; we are part of Thee, Thyself, O Spirit of the Living God!" was his profound inward conviction; and by this he abode steadfastly, in immovable calm. More recently, as his mind matured, he had begun to study for himself the life of Christ in the gospels, and as the problem of human suffering pressed itself more and more upon his attention in his profession, the more he understood how the pervading influence of such a life, how a complete surrender to its example, could redeem and save.

But all these conclusions and convictions were but a part of his inner life; the world, still less the world of society in which he moved, would have raised its eyebrows in surprise at the idea of the handsome, well-bred Dr Edward Arbuckle having decided religious views of

any kind. Still, it was well for him that he had such a belief, for the day came, was even now on the wing, when that faith in God was to be to him "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Natalie, with quick discernment, saw that something had occurred to disturb her lover's usual happy serenity, but, knowing now by experience how many painful episodes must happen in a medical man's daily life, she forbore to question or to rally him on his sombre expression. Still, the interrogation which was not on her lips was in her eyes, and he saw it.

Suddenly he stopped in the middle of some commonplace remark and said, gravely—

"I must tell you—I got quite a shock the other day. I heard of the death of an old friend."

"Ah! indeed. When did he die?" inquired Natalie, sympathetically.

"Many years ago. Ten or twelve, perhaps. I kept writing and writing to him, wondering why he never answered me, when all the while the poor fellow had been dead."

"Dear me! how sad! But who told you? How did you come to know at last?"

Dr Arbuckle was about to say "Mrs Tranent," but somehow he shrank from it. Had Mrs Tranent been anyone else than Hetty, the barmaid, a chance acquaintance of long ago, he would have spoken out without hesitation, but he merely said—

"A lady who knew him in the old country told me."

"You must have felt strangely to hear of it."

"I confess I did. I have felt shivery ever since. I cannot get him out of my mind. I find myself wonder-

ing if he will remember me as I remembered him. That terrible Unseen! how it envelops us, baffles us, mocks us!"

"Yes, and how we cling to the idea of life and memory beyond in a different state of being," said Natalie. "Tennyson sings—

‘Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal form from all beside,
And I shall know him when we meet.’

Do you know I take wonderful comfort from that expression of the universal hope, if not belief."

"It would be hard for you and me not to believe it, Natalie, otherwise how in the end could we ever part?"

"Don't speak of the end, Edward; I cannot bear it. Let us be happy while we may. I am tired of trouble and death, but there is a wonderful happiness in being able to alleviate the trouble ever so little." And she sighed a happy sigh.

"My darling! oh, my darling!" cried the lover, impassionedly, forgetting all but her—

‘O, we will walk this world,
Yoked in all exercise of noble end,
And so through those dark gates across the wild
That no man knows.’

And so, quoting the poet; rambling hither and thither in the fields of literature, science, and art, mind answering mind with full understanding, hearts content in mutual love, this and the other happy evenings wore away.

CHAPTER XIII.

“THE LEAST OF THESE, MY BRETHREN.”

FROM the day in which she had revealed her identity to Dr Arbuckle, Mrs Tranent had not once reverted to the circumstance of their previous acquaintance. The episode had been as a pebble dropped into a serene, sunlit pool; a splash, a few circles quivering and dying upon the outer rim, and all was peace again. The same suave society smile lit up their faces in conversation; they chatted and talked of the weather; the beauty of this most beautiful of all Canadian months, gorgeous October; of the questions being agitated in the public press; of Freddie, and the happy progress his leg was making towards recovery; but of what was ever uppermost in the minds of both when they met, never a word. Mrs Tranent was restless, ill at ease, and miserable when Dr Arbuckle was not present.

She was surprised, annoyed, deeply disappointed. She had assumed that the knowledge of her identity with the Hetty to whom he had made such ephemeral love so long ago would have broken down that impalpable wall of polite courtesy over which the Doctor quietly talked to her, and beyond which she felt she herself could not pass without risking the loss of his respect. Her reluctant move had been made in vain; she might as well have kept her secret to herself for all the difference it had made. He cared as little for her now—less, in fact, than in these old days he had forgotten so lightly, but which she could never cease to

remem' r. Nevertheless, she loved him well enough to wait; she might—she must win him yet; and so long as he did not seek to marry another—ah—let him but try that—and then—then!—

Such a possibility flashing across her mind would cause her white brows to frown, her red lips to whiten and contract, her hands to clench stiffly. At such moments she would mutter wildly— “If he did!—if he dared!—no!—he shall not fool me twice. I should play my trump card then—and win!”

Freddie had been particularly good and obedient during his confinement; he was now able to move about on a crutch, and to-day he was waltzing about in a paroxysm of impatience and delight, for Dr Arbuckle had promised to drive him over to see the sick little boys at the Children's Hospital. The Doctor had found Freddie a very generous-souled boy, and had no trouble in persuading him to save the five cent. pieces he had usually purchased peas with for special Sunday school exercise, and give them to the poor convalescent lads there who had no money. It was not for this, however, that he drove Freddie there to-day; he was humouring the request of a sick boy who lay there—Sam Tuck, a city arab.

Sam had been the chief support of a dissipated grandmother with whom he lived, his father and mother being dead so long ago that he had no remembrance of them. The old lady's Presbyterianism and love of liquor were of equal strength—the former she exercised by drilling him continually in the “requirin's an' forbiddin's” of the fifth commandment, and the duty of being grateful to her for doing so much for him—viz., allowing him to sleep

at her back, where the smell of whisky permeated the very bedclothes, and for taking care of the money he earned, which she did by swallowing it.

“Children should aye be gratefu’ to them that brings them up; an’ ye maun aye mak’ a’ the bawbees ye can, Sammy, my man, an’ jist be doin’ awa’ wi’ the shoon ye hae till I get a chance o’ a guid second-hand pair for ye. Hoots, ye ken! ance the snaw fills up that crack in the side, an’ that hole in the heel, ye’ll no find the cauld when ye’re rinnin’ about. Noo, gie me the siller. Eh! ye’ve dune fine the nicht. Tak’ the bottle an’ rin ower to the tavern an’ get me a pint o’ auld rye—eh?—what? No gaun oot the nicht again? No! for a’ yer puir auld grannie, that’s brocht ye up an’ dune sae muckle for ye, is jist deein’ wi’ the cramps in her inside? Oh, the on-gratitude o’ the risin’ generation! Folk wearin’ their heart’s bluid oot for them, an’ that’s a’ ye get! would let you lie here an dee—oo—hoo—hoo!”

Such was the general nightly lecture to which Samuel Tucket, or Sam Tuck as he was called, had been treated all the preceding winter.

In summer he had not been so badly off, for fruit was plentiful, bread he could buy, and the nights so warm he could sleep about the wharves, or in any out-of-the way corner, where his grandmother’s muttering and snoring could not reach him.

Then he had made the acquaintance of Freddie Tranent, who was about his own size, and who had given him a stunning suit of clothes, which his grandmother was planning to steal and sell for drink. But he had kept out of her way, and left her to bewail the strength of original sin rampant in the boy who had so ungratefully

left her and her nightly lectures on the duty of children "to pawrents."

And now Sam lay dying. He had been found one morning lying on one of the wharves drenched with the rain which had fallen in the night, unable to get up because of a keen pain in his side, which made him sick and fain to cry out when he moved.

When Dr Arbuckle in passing through the wards had noticed the pale, half-starved boy, he was struck by the wistfulness of his look, and presently he saw him put out a thin hand, and beckon him.

"Are you Dr 'Buckle?" he asked, in a small, weak voice.

"Yes," answered the astonished Doctor, "do you know me?"

"Yes. Freddie Tranent tole me about you. When'll ye see Fred?"

"I'll see him to-day. What do you want, my lad?"

"Tell Fred to come and see me; guess I 'got to go soon. I want to say good-bye to Freddie, he bin awful good to me."

Dr Arbuckle looked at the little lad. He knew it would be all over with him before long, and he wondered what sort of life the poor waif had led that he felt so little regret in leaving it.

"Freddie has had a broken leg himself, and is only beginning to be able to walk about again."

"Oh," said the lad, a glad light of relief breaking over his wasted face, "I knowed it! I knowed suthin' was up when he didn't come out when I whistled for him. Oh, my! won't he be mighty glad to see me again? and me him? Will he come to-day, Doctor?"

"No, no, not to-day, my lad, but to-morrow I'll fetch Freddie to see you."

"They won't tote me off afore then, will they?" he asked, anxiously.

"Oh, no, my boy; no, no, keep your mind easy. I'll bring Freddie all right to-morrow," said the Doctor, assuringly, but rising hastily.

The children, the sick and dying children, with their wistful eyes and innocent, simple questions, always tried him keenly, and left him with a rankling heartache.

"Do you know who I am going to take you to see to-day?" asked the Doctor, as he helped Freddie up the long flight of steps leading to the balconies of the Children's Hospital.

"No," said Freddie, stopping and looking wonderingly into the Doctor's face.

"Did you know a boy, a very poor boy, they call Samuel Tucket!"

Freddie shook his head, and answered "No."

"Why, that's strange. He said he knew you and wished me to tell you that Sam Tuck wanted to——"

"Oh!" shouted Freddie, joyously, "Sam Tuck! Do I know Sam Tuck? You just bet I do! Is he in here?"

"Yes, my boy—he—he is——" dying, the doctor was about to say—but he spared the child; what could Freddie know of death? and simply said, "going away soon, and wants to say good-bye to you."

"Where's he going to, Doc 'Buckle?"

"To heaven, where all good children go."

Freddie glanced quickly up at the blue overhead, mused a moment, and then said—

"Is that so? And where do the bad go?"

The Doctor smiled.

"I don't think there are any bad little children. I never met any, at least."

"No more did I," returned Freddie promptly, as, quite out of breath, he at length stood upright on his crutch on the balcony.

"Is he asleep, nurse?" asked the Doctor when Freddie and himself came up to the cot, where Sam lay with his eyes closed.

"I am just wondering," replied the nurse, bending over the child, whose wasted face had assumed a strange expression of rest and serenity.

"Why, Doctor! he spoke to me only a few minutes ago—he asked me if Freddie had come yet."

"That's me! I'm Freddie! Tell him I come to see him all right," whispered Freddie—whispering he knew not why—something in the faces of the Doctor and nurse constraining him.

The Doctor laid his hand on the stilled heart under the clothes and withdrew it again with a short sigh.

"Poor little fellow! Come away, Freddie, dear."

"Ain't you—can't I—why don't Sam open his eyes and speak to me?" asked Freddie in a choky voice.

"He can't, my boy. God has taken him, just a few minutes ago," said the Doctor, as they stepped out again upon the balcony. Again Freddie glanced up at the blue and mused.

"And won't I—won't I never see him again no more?" he questioned, his face paling and his lips quivering.

"Be a good boy, Freddie, and God will take you too some day," said the Doctor, compelled to say something to comfort the lad. But Freddie had it out with himself,

all alone, round the corner of the balcony, while the Doctor, infected by the child's emotion, walked up and down, finding some difficulty in controlling his own feelings. By and by, as the sobs grew less violent, he said, kindly—

“Now, then, Freddie, I will give you a drive round the city.”

Freddie wiped his eyes, took up his crutch, and sobbing still, prepared to follow the Doctor.

CHAPTER XIV.

“FREDDIE PUTS HIS FOOT IN IT.”

“**I** HAVE brought a young gentleman to see you to-day, Natalie,” said Dr Arbuckle gaily as he entered the hospital reception room.

“This is Master Freddie Tranent, a great chum of mine, and one I want you to be very good to indeed.”

“How do you do, Freddie? We shall be very good friends, I am sure,” said Natalie, shaking hands with the young gentleman, who had already made himself comfortable on one of the lounges. Freddie had a pair of honest brown eyes, and they said, when he shook hands with Miss Wyngate, as plain as eyes could say—“I like you.” The child stared at her in undisguised admiration. It was her afternoon off duty, and she had doffed her nurse’s uniform, and was attired in soft draperies, which hung gracefully about her form, and set off her supple figure. Her dark hair was brushed up and drawn back from her white forehead, emphasising her pronounced and finely-arched eyebrows. Her face was pale, of a creamy healthy paleness; her soft, dark eyes were alight with love and pleasure, and her beautifully curved lips were smiling. The Doctor saw the open admiration in the lad’s face, and was intensely pleased thereby.

“Can I leave Freddie with you for half an hour or so? I have to call at one or two places where there is scarlatina, and I don’t care about taking him to the door and jumping in beside him, right from the infection. Let him amuse himself here awhile. I shall call for him on my way home.”

"We shall be delighted, Freddie and I, shan't we?" said Natalie.

"You bet!" promptly responded Freddie.

"I ain't in no hurry Doc' 'Buckle, take your time," he called after the Doctor patronisingly.

"Are you the Doctor's sister?" he queried, as soon as they were alone.

"No, oh dear no!" laughed Natalie. "What makes you think so?"

"I dunno. I wish't you was," said Freddie, gravely.

"Why? What difference would that make, Freddie?"

"Oh, 'kase you see I could come and see you whenever I liked. I want to come and see you all the time."

"You are very kind, Freddie; but you can come any day I am off duty—any day Dr Arbuckle fetches you. Are you lame?"

"No, I ain't lame; but I got my leg broken, and Doc' 'Buckle says I must hippety hop on this here crutch till my leg gets stronger. Might crack again, you see."

"Oh, indeed! but how did you happen to break your leg?" asked Miss Wyngate, presenting Freddie with a bunch of fine Concord grapes on a plate.

"I was ridin' a phlocipede down our stairs, when the blamed thing got baulky, and then started off before I knowed. When I'm better, I'm going to try it again though. It's bound to go next time."

Natalie, whose eyes were sparkling with fun, uttered a little cry of protest.

"Oh! no, no, Freddie, dear; you mustn't think of such a thing—you might break your neck. Have you any more brothers or sisters?"

"No, not a blessed one, only ma."

"Oh, well, mamma must be very fond and proud of such a bright boy as you Freddie."

"I dunno," said Freddie, vaguely; "she says I'm an awful bad, wicked boy, and she is goin' to send me to a man's school next year, where I'll be kep' under."

Natalie looked at the honest little fellow, picking his grapes off one by one, and speaking in all earnestness.

"Oh, well, of course that's to educate you; but you love your mamma, I'm sure."

Freddie paused, and looked at the winsome face scanning him so curiously.

"I—dunno. I guess so," he replied, slowly and doubtfully. "But," he added, briskly, "I love Doc' 'Buckle—you bet your boots I do."

The pale face was suffused with a rare flush at the boy's enthusiasm, and she stepped over to the table and brought him another bunch of grapes, and sat down on the lounge beside him. Freddie had endeared himself to her by his love for the Doctor.

"He cured your broken leg, then?"

"Oh, yes, but I knowed him long afore that. He is often at our house. He comes for dinner and sometimes for tea—oh—often and often. Ma don't let anybody else in when Doc' 'Buckle comes."

"Oh, indeed!" said Natalie, with a dawning wonder why her lover had never mentioned this lady with whom he was on such intimate terms. It scarcely amounted to a thought, however, for he had many affluent patients, and was generally well liked.

"Do you like pictures?"

"Do I!" answered Freddie, in a what-a-question tone.

"Then I have a lovely picture-book here, all about

every kind of bird, and the different kinds of nests they build, and the eggs they lay. I'll write your name in it, and you can take it home with you and put it amongst the rest of your books. Will you care to have it?"

"Will I? Well now!"

Natalie was intensely amused at this queer free and easy boy. Her experience of boys had been limited, and the small juvenile prigs she remembered visiting her mother with their mammas were in no wise like this frank, brown-eyed, slangy youngster, who was so much in earnest in all he said and did.

As he watched Natalie writing his name in the book a sudden idea flashed into his busy brain and illumined his face. He had been puzzling out *why* Dr Arbuckle should have left him here with a lady who was not his sister, nor any relation, so far as he knew, and now it struck him, and he smiled. Natalie brought over the book to him, and as he took it from her hand he said, with comical knowingness—

"Ah! I know now."

"Know! what is it you know, Freddie?" asked Natalie, in boundless surprise. Freddie was full of surprises. He laid hold of her arm, and pulling her down till her ear was at his mouth, he whispered, loudly—

"You're his gal!"

Natalie sprang up and stared at the boy, her face in the rosiest confusion, and at that moment Dr Arbuckle entered the room and suddenly stopped short in wonder at Natalie's comic expression of dismay.

"Ain't she, Doc' 'Buckle?—ain't she your gal?" cried Freddie, following up his advantage. The Doctor was electrified by this appeal to him, and swiftly taking in the

situation, he sat down on the nearest chair and burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter, in which Natalie was fain to join.

"Master Freddie, you take the cake over all the youngsters I ever met. What was he saying to you when I came in, Natalie?"

"Oh! don't ask me, please. He is certainly a 'cute boy; aren't you Freddie?" said Natalie, not quite recovered from her laughing confusion, but handing the fruit basket to the Doctor.

"Ain't she, Doctor? Miss Wyngate's your gal, ain't she?" persisted Freddie, and the Doctor, despite Natalie's imploring looks, answered honestly—

"Yes, Freddie—you have a long head, my boy. You are quite right. Miss Wyngate here is to be Mrs Arbuckle some of these fine days, and then you'll come and visit us all you want to."

"But won't you come and see mamma, and take dinner and tea like you used to all the time?"

"Oh, yes—yes—of course," said the Doctor, hastily. "Meantime we had better be getting home." And rather sharply, so Natalie thought, the Doctor hustled Freddie down and into the phaeton which was waiting at the door. After he had seated Freddie he vaulted lightly back again up the flights of steps, and returned for a moment to the room where Natalie was still standing meditating.

"Isn't he a terror—that boy!" laughed the Doctor.

"The most amusing fellow," responded Natalie, her dark eyes dancing with mirth. "Where have you hidden him away all this time? He is the funniest child!"

"Well, good-bye for the present, darling. I'll see

you to-morrow—or—no—next day.” And, folding his arms about her yielding form, he kissed her twice, and was about to go when when she held him, while he looked at her in mute inquiry.

“Edward!—you love me?” she whispered, her eyes troubled and full of imploring prayer.

“Natalie! child! my wife! what do you mean?” he cried, looking at her in sudden alarm.

“Nothing, nothing, love! Only I think if I were to lose you, I would surely die.”

“You will never lose me, dear, while life and reason remain. What on earth made such a notion as that enter your head?”

“I don’t know; it is silly and foolish, I know; but the moment you entered the room with Freddie, a something—I know not what—a dread of some evil impending came over me. I have felt that once before, before I knew you at all. But there—it’s over now—say you love me once more—there—I am better now.”

And of her own accord she kissed him again, and he departed. As he drove away out at the gate with Freddie, he turned and looked up, and saw her standing at the window, and he waved his hand and drove off.

Freddie was safely deposited at The Larches, but it was in vain that Mrs Tranent smiled her sweetest, and coaxed the Doctor to come in and have dinner with them. He must be home—he had engagements—he—in short, he could not possibly come in then. Mrs Tranent’s delicate bloom deepened visibly, and an unpleasant light came into her eyes as he drove off.

“Oh, ma! Sam Tuck’s dead,” said Freddie, walking in on his crutch.

"And who on earth is Sam Tuck, pray?"

"That nice fellow that carried the papers, you know—that used to whistle for me and make you mad. He's gone to heaven, ma?"

"Well, I'm thankful he won't whistle for you any more. You must learn to keep decent company."

Freddie's countenance fell. He had asked for bread, and received a stone.

Suddenly he remembered his book—he had left it on the hall table, and he hobbled out and brought it in.

"See my nice book, ma?"

"Oh, don't bother me with your books and things, I have something else to think of."

Freddie silently laid down the book, and settled himself on a chair, with a sigh. He looked round the great sumptuously furnished apartment, and sighed again. His heart was heavy, and he was weary, oh, so weary! And he would never see Sam Tuck no more, and nobody cared to speak to him—nobody but Doc' 'Buckle; *he* was a brick! His busy mind flashed thence to Natalie and the discovery he had made, and again he spoke out.

"I know something, ma."

His mother made no answer. She was crocheting a bit of fancy work—fiercely.

"She gave me that book," he said again.

"Who? What are you speaking of? Who's she?"

"Doc' 'Buckle's gal. She's going to be Mrs 'Buckle one of them days. He tole me hisself."

The hands that were crocheting so fiercely fell limp in her lap, and Mrs Tranent sat staring dumbly at the boy, who, encouraged by her attention, went on innocently—

"He took me up to the hospital, and she gave me

that nice book and writ my name in it, and when she's married to Doc' 'Buckle I'm going to see her every day."

Mrs Tranent rose, and gliding silently up to the book, opened it and read—

"To Freddie,

"With Natalie Wyngate's love."

For a long time she stood staring at the innocent inscription, and with a white unnatural calm she came and sat down beside Freddie, and to his surprise put her arm on his shoulder. It was a rare manifestation of motherly attention for Freddie to receive.

"Freddie, tell me all about it. Who told you the Doctor was to be married to Miss Wyngate?" she demanded in a quick voice.

"He tole me hisself, ma. I asked him if Miss Wyngate was his gal, and he up and laughed and said yes, and said we was to come and see them when she was Mrs 'Buckle. Won't it be just bully, ma?" asked Freddie, delighted to think he was entertaining his mother with the news; it felt so nice when she let him talk to her.

But Mrs Tranent rose and went upstairs without another word.

For fully an hour she paced up and down her room like a caged lioness, every now and then uttering a short ugly laugh.

"So this is the meaning of his coldness to me—to me who have borne and spared him and waited. To be thwarted by this dark insignificant-looking lunatic! That she—she should come between me and him—she his wife! Never! No, madam! I have a word to say to that. I knew there was something—I felt it—always

polite—always so courteous. Oh, yes! Natalie Wyngate, forsooth! Never, not while I live! I must manage her as well as him. Let me think! Oh, let me think!" and she sat down with her 'elbows on her elegant bureau and gazed at her own distorted face in the glass, taking counsel of her own wicked heart.

CHAPTER XV.

MRS TRANENT CALLS ON MISS WYNGATE.

A WEEK, a full week, had elapsed since that Thursday on which Freddie had visited her, and which was Natalie's weekly day off. Dr Arbuckle had not been able to see her, as he had promised, so occupied had his time been with business of importance, but now he had returned from his unexpected trip to New York, as signified by the note she had just received, notifying her of his intention to call on the morrow evening. He had written immediately on his arrival home last evening, and it had come to her by the morning mail. She kissed the note and put it in her pocket, and went in to her duty in the wards with a glow in her eyes and a happy light on her face.

"Good news this morning, I see," said Miss Stobie, with a quizzical smile, as she gave her the usual orders. "When is he coming back from New York?"

"He is back," replied the happy girl. "He will be here to-morrow evening."

"Ah, that's well," responded Miss Stobie, from whom Natalie kept no secrets.

But Dr Arbuckle had also mailed another note on the evening of his return. It was addressed to The Larches, and ran thus:—

"Dear Mrs Tranent,—I found on my arrival home your note intimating that you wished to see me, in order to communicate some facts concerning the death of my

friend Ramsay. As this is a subject in which I naturally take the deepest interest, I will call at The Larches at half-past three to-morrow afternoon.—Yours cordially,

Edward Arbuckle, M.D.”

“Wednesday Eve.”

The fever of impatience and suspense with which Mrs Tranent awaited this answer to her note, despatched two days previously, had thinned her cheeks and hollowed her eyes. At a church meeting she had heard casually of his having gone to New York to attend the Medical Convention there, but scarce even the knowledge that he was out of town, and could not therefore answer her mis-sive, could allay her impatience. She had laid her plans, but needed his answer in order to put them into execution. A sudden flash of triumph lit up her face as she read the note, and thrusting it into her pocket, she muttered, “Now for it,” and ran upstairs to dress.

In the hospital Natalie had finished up her work in the ward she had charge of, and had now a few minutes leisure before further attending to the patients.

“A lady wishes to see you, nurse,” said one of the hospital servants.

“But—this is not my receiving hour yet—I cannot see any one till afternoon. Did the lady give you her card?”

“No—nurse.”

“Well—please tell the lady that I will be off duty in the afternoon, when I will be glad to see her.”

After a few minutes the girl again returned.

“She says will you please see her for a few moments; it is urgent business.”

"Well—dear me! Then I suppose I must," said Natalie, and walked swiftly along the corridors and down to the reception room.

It was Mrs Tranent.

"I am so sorry, so very sorry to interrupt you in your duties, Miss Wyngate, but duty to you compels me to delay no longer."

Natalie bowed with natural grace, a slight surprise tinging her pale face.

"Allow me," said Mrs Tranent, rising and closing the door, "What I have to say this morning, Miss Wyngate, had better be said with closed doors."

The familiarity with Mrs Tranent spoke sounded offensive. In her haste, she had not even introduced herself, and Natalie waited with silent dignity for her to do so. The expectant repose of her manner irritated the visitor. Mrs Tranent had studied well and imitated closely, but this calm naturalness she had never been able to attain. She could bear down upon people like a ship in a full sail carrying everything before her with her suave speech and fine appearance, and she could also be very sweet and womanly when she chose to exert herself for the rôle. But this was something beyond her; the superiority of the real over the sham lady.

"And now, Miss Wyngate," she said hurriedly, "I am about to ask you a question."

"Excuse me, madam," Natalie said, quietly. "To whom am I indebted? I did not get your card."

"Oh! of course—so stupid of me—certainly, but I am so nervous over this business—indeed, I thought of you so much, I forgot myself. Mrs Tranent of The Larches."

Natalie bowed and smiled. This, then, was Freddie's

mother! Immediately she extended her hand with frank apology.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs Tranent—I know you now. Master Freddie was up to see me last week."

"And now for my question, Miss Wyngate."

"Certainly, Mrs Tranent," responded Natalie, brightly.

"Are you engaged? Do you expect to marry Dr Edward Arbuckle?"

A bombshell dropped at her feet could scarce have shocked Natalie more, and the ugly expression in Mrs Tranent's eyes repelled her.

"Madam!" she exclaimed, and involuntarily drew herself up with dignified *hateur*.

"You need not get angry, Miss Wyngate; I am very sorry for you, but I must do my duty. Dr Arbuckle has been playing a double game, and it's time you knew it."

With a contemptuous smile of incredulity Natalie rose and walked over to the door, scorning to reply, but Mrs Tranent interposed herself ere she could reach it.

"No, don't think of going. I know how you feel—I am sorry—but if you are honourably engaged to him, why are you ashamed of it?" she sneered, standing with her back to the door.

"I am not ashamed, Mrs Tranent; I am very proud to be affianced to such a man as Dr Arbuckle," retorted Natalie, stung by the sneer of this parvenu.

"And you really expect to marry him?"

"I do—most certainly," was the firm answer.

"You never will! never while I live!"

Natalie had paled a little before, but it was with resentment; now, however, her lips grew white with a

nameless fear, for there was no mistaking the earnestness with which the woman before her now spoke.

"You are pale, Miss Wyngate—you will fall. Do sit down and let us talk the thing over calmly," said Mrs Tranent, offering to support Natalie, who, however, rallied, and mutely pointed to a chair.

"Yes, that's right; we'll both sit down and come to an understanding," said the full-blooded, determined woman; and Natalie, with the sense of impending evil strong upon her, also sat down.

"Tell me, madam, what is the meaning of all this? What are my private affairs to you?" she asked, quickly.

"It means this, Miss Wyngate, that you cannot marry Dr Arbuckle. He and I have been intimate these last twelve years—see—there is the ring he gave me twelve years ago."

"That is nothing," said Natalie, bravely. "What are his relations to you now?"

Mrs Tranent smiled.

"The same as ever; with this difference, that while he has been fooling you—"

"Mrs Tranent!" protested Natalie.

"I repeat it; fooling and making love to you, he has at the same time been visiting me—and—well, I think mine is the prior claim."

Here Mrs Tranent smiled such a knowing smile that Natalie turned away in disgust.

"Why, ask my boy, he will tell you the truth; he will tell you of the intimacy between Dr Arbuckle and myself; further, of course, the child don't guess."

With a sinking heart Natalie remembered Freddie's innocent prattle about the frequency of Dr Arbuckle's

visits; but then, remembering himself—all he had said, all he had done—remembering his look last Thursday when he had held her and said nothing should separate them, she suddenly exclaimed:—

“It is not true, Mrs Tranent! Dr Arbuckle is incapable of deceit, he is coming here to-morrow evening and—”

“After spending this afternoon and evening in my company! Oh, Edward, you always were a sad flirt!” laughed the lady sarcastically.

“Excuse me, madam, I do not believe you,” said Natalie, rising; “any person could make such a statement.”

“Yes, but every one cannot prove it as I can. Come down to The Larches this afternoon at a quarter to four and I will show you your immaculate Doctor, the man who is amusing himself at your expense, sitting at his ease in my parlour, and enjoying himself very much indeed.”

“I do not believe it,” Natalie persisted, with only a deeper light in her eye to indicate inward feeling; “but I will come. I may believe it when I see it.”

Mrs Tranent drew a long breath, imperceptibly. She had gained what she had come for, and could now afford to be urbane.

“Don’t be too shocked when you come, Miss Wyngate. Men *will* do these sort of things, you know, and you can see for yourself already, that after his return from New York, he comes to spend the first evening with his future wife—your humble servant. At a quarter past four, then. *Au revoir!*”

Natalie opened the door, and stood aside in silence,

while her visitor swept grandly out. That last shot had told. This afternoon would show whether he, the man she loved, would really spend the first leisure hours of his return with this loud, vulgar woman. For loud and vulgar Mrs Tranent certainly had been during this interview. But no—never! Edward Arbuckle was no such man—she could not—and would not believe it.

“A penny for your thoughts, Miss Wyngate? Have you been getting an invitation to the wedding?” asked Nurse Watson, a bright little woman with whom she was associated in the wards, and who had observed Mrs Tranent, sailing down the corridor.

“What wedding?” asked Natalie, listlessly, not dreaming to whom she referred.

“Why, Dr Arbuckle’s of course. Didn’t you know he’s been after the widow this long time? Oh, why—yes! its to come off soon, I believe.”

“I did not know,” Natalie murmured. “Is it really so? Does he go there much?” She asked the questions more to conceal her own agitation than anything else, but the answer came ready enough.

“I should rather think he did. At least he went there often enough when Carrie, my sister, lived opposite some months ago. These are your towels, I think.”

The chatty little nurse handed her the towels and passed on, little dreaming the effect her gossiping words had caused. For none of the nurses had heard as yet of Natalie’s engagement, and she had passed on the news as a matter of course, all being interested in the genial Dr Arbuckle.

It seemed as if the forenoon would never pass, but at last it was two o’clock and Natalie was at liberty to

dress and go out. She was pale and heavy with the overhanging evil, but she resolutely thrust behind her all doubts ; she would not allow herself to distrust him ; no, not for one moment. She would go to Mrs Tranent's simply because she knew he would not be there, and when he came to-morrow evening she would tell him all that had been said and done. She did not go to play the spy, but to be able to throw back that woman's accusations, to prove how little her assertions were worth.

In spite of all this reasoning, however, this persistent faith in the faithfulness of her lover, it was with troubled eyes and a sorrowful face that she came out at the hospital gate and hailed a car that went down in the direction of The Larches.

CHAPTER XVI.

NATALIE SEES FOR HERSELF.

NICOL opened the door when Miss Wyngate rang, and as it closed she heard a laugh she well knew. It turned her rigid, and saying to the maid—

“Thank you—that will do; I will announce myself,” she turned and waited until Nicol—wondering—withdrew, and then she stepped up to the parlour door. Her intention was to enter, when it suddenly struck her what should she say—how account for her presence there. Setting her foot on the mat, she paused irresolutely; but soft as was her footfall, it did not escape the quick ear of the woman who was waiting for her. She had been nervously waiting for her ring; she had detected her low tones to Nicol—she knew she was about to come in; she knew she was standing irresolutely in the doorway, and she cleverly improvised a scene for the special benefit of the onlookers.

Dr Arbuckle was resting in an elegant low backed easy-chair, with his back to the door, and one leg thrown easily over the other. Close beside him stood Mrs Tranent, attired in a magnificent tea-gown, slowly fanning herself.

Evidently the Doctor had just come in, for he took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead, as though he had been perspiring.

“Let us see,” said Mrs Tranent, slowly taking a ring

from her finger, "how long is it now since you gave me that ring, the ring I have always kept for your sake," she added, with one of her smiles.

The Doctor, somewhat surprised and not a little annoyed, took the ring held out to him, and looked at it carelessly.

"I'm sure I couldn't say, Hetty; ten or twelve years, I suppose," he said, the old name coming involuntarily to his lips with the memories the ring called up, as he handed it back again.

Instead of an outstretched palm, Mrs Tranent held out her little finger to receive it, and Dr Arbuckle, still more annoyed, quietly put it on. This sudden and familiar way of resurrecting a long-buried youthful folly was extremely distasteful to him, but his gentlemanly instincts prevailed, and he assumed a courtesy he was far from feeling. He began to wonder if this was the preamble of what she had to communicate.

Natalie, however, had seen enough. He was there. She had heard him with his own lips corroborate the statement that he had given this woman a ring; she had seen him take her hand in his, and put it back on her finger; she had heard him call her—Hetty! And all this, too, without either Mrs Tranent or himself knowing of her presence there—so she thought. Upright and single-minded herself, she was utterly incapable of suspecting the wiles of a scheming woman. Indeed, she no longer thought hardly of, no longer blamed Mrs Tranent. He had been wronging them both. She must believe the evidence of her own senses; and nothing could alter what she had seen and heard. With a keen pain at her heart, and a singing noise in her ears, she turned and walked

back over the velvety carpets, yielding and soft as moss to the tread, and quietly let herself out by the hall door.

On the steps outside she stood for a moment, and raised her hand impotently to her brow, trying to realise it all, trying to understand that it was he—Edward—the man she loved, and who had sworn to love her and her only, whom she had seen and heard talking to that woman in there. Was it all over, the brief dream of happiness which had followed that dark eclipse, born of desperation and despair? Was there no truth or honour in man? What did he mean, how dared he importune her as he had done to marry him while bound, as he evidently was, to this woman? And yet, in spite of her anger, her outraged love, when she recalled his frank and manly face, his clear eyes alight with happy love, his fervent words, she was staggered. Could it be possible? was it not all a cruel dream from which she would yet awake to find him all she had ever believed him? But no—no!—nothing could explain what she had seen—she was quite awake, cruelly awake.

“Natalie, child! what ails you? You look like death itself,” exclaimed Miss Stobie when she met her coming up the hospital stairs.

“Do I? I don’t feel particularly bright,” answered Natalie, with a short, hard laugh, and passed up.

Miss Stobie looked after her in silent wonder. Presently she stopped and looked back, swiftly evading the searching look of her superior.

“Will I be required for another hour or so, Miss Stobie?” she asked.

“You know you are at liberty for the rest of the day. It is your turn,” answered Miss Stobie, coldly; feeling

hurt at being so abruptly shut out from the confidence of her favourite.

Natalie turned the key in her room door when she had entered, and sinking passively upon the edge of her bed tried to think what it all meant to her.

She mentally reviewed the whole of their love's history from the beginning, and the more she thought the more incredible did it seem that a man of such fair seeming could be such an adept at deceit. As she thought of all he had been to her, her anguish, like a mighty wave, rose up and swept over her, and she was fain to drop upon her knees and wrestle with it until it passed. The love which had been life and light and hope had, after all, been but a make-believe, a mockery of all that was highest and best in life. Now it was over—all over—she repeated, crushing down mercilessly the tenderness that would well up in spite of herself. She could not get her mind out of the groove into which it had lain so happily; could not face the bleakness and isolation of a future so different from the immediate past, the past in which she had made for herself such a fool's paradise. In her pain, her weakness, her inability to conquer herself, a strong instinct prompted her to pray, to call on God for the strength she needed so much; but with a new-born cynicism she smothered the natural cry of her soul.

"No," she cried, starting to her feet with resolution. "Dr Bruno prays publicly and privately. He prays—he confessed to me that he felt the need of prayer. Oh, my God!" she exclaimed, refusing to class herself with hypocrites, and yet unconsciously appealing to the Highest in the agony of the moment.

After a little she sat up, pale and resolved.

“There is one thing to be done, and it must be done at once—now—while he is there.”

Opening a drawer, she took therefrom a photograph which she looked at long and earnestly, with sadness and wonder, and then she laid it face downward on the table. On top of it she laid the ring, the engagement ring he had given her, remembering bitterly that another woman also wore a ring, placed on her finger by his own hand. She gathered together the many books he had given her—“The Professor at the Breakfast table,” “Browning’s Poems,” and others of a like calibre, and with dry eyes and firm lips wrapped them all up with the neatness which had become so characteristic of her lately, and tied the parcel with a string. Then tying a veil across her face she unlocked the door and walked down the stairs and out of the grounds with an unfaltering step.

“Will you please give this parcel to the Doctor when he comes in,” she said quietly, when the housekeeper had answered her ring at the door. “Just say that Miss Wyngate called and delivered them.”

Mrs Watson took the parcel, and with a smiling remark about the weather Miss Wyngate bowed and left.

She could not go back to the hospital just yet; she wanted to be away somewhere alone, to think, to fortify herself, and become strong to take up the broken threads and go on weaving the warp and woof of her life mechanically, without pattern and without colour. She wandered aimlessly away down to the bay, and stood looking out over the calm expanse of Lake Ontario, a vast mirror, reflecting the soft warmth of the blue overhead, and veiled in a far, mystical haze where it met and

kissed the horizon. But it was busy life upon the wharf, and excursion boats went tooting out, and came screaming in, and there was hurrying and laughing and talking, and the good-natured jostling of a well-to-do populace bent for an afternoon's outing upon the water. Natalie turned away; the happiness of the people, of paterfamilias with his boys, of the radiant mother among her girls, but made her feel her own desolation. Up the street she hailed a car, and rode to one of the beautiful flowery suburbs along the edge of the lake, and here she found the solitude she sought for. The day was soft, dreamy, beautiful. The trees were gorgeous in their October tints of russet, crimson, and gold; in the woods the spaces between the trees were filled with a dim, impalpable blue, and there was an indescribable pathos in the stillness that hung in the air.

Natalie felt the brooding of Nature; it fell on her bruised and wounded spirit with soothing, heavenly calm. She wandered along the clean and pebbly beach where the waters, with soft rhythmic cadence, lapped the shore; and sat down on a sun-bleached log, which some bygone storm had drifted hither, and cast up on the sands. Oh, the unspeakable beauty of the day! the gorgeous splendour of the woods near and far! the vast and boundless blue above, the vast and boundless blue below—the breathless rapture of the far, dim solitudes!

As she sat and gazed, the temporary hardness of her spirit melted, the bitterness so foreign to her nature passed away, and warm tears welled up and dropped into her lap—she was so lonely—ah, so lonely! She could not live alone; it was terrible this awful loneliness of the soul; she must lay hold of some support; and with sudden

repentance for the rebellion she had felt, she lifted her face to the sky and murmured—"Forgive me, oh God!—and forsake me—oh, forsake me not!"

The great calm of the day grew slowly upon her. She grew stronger, the past was past, she had dreamed her dream, and was now awake. Dr Arbuckle must be nothing more to her; he was unworthy of a woman's thought; but the ideal she had cherished and loved—ah! that was her own—her own forever! She would go back and take up her life where it had broken off; more than ever would she become a useful, helpful woman; more than ever would she be faithful to the high standard she had set up. Like St Augustine, she would make a stepping-stone of her dead self to higher things. Her mother's death and her own affliction, of these she had already made one step; this should be another and higher.

The sun had dropped into the lake, flushing all the Western hemisphere with ruddy gold, when Natalie rose from her long, solitary communion with herself, and set her face homeward. She had walked up through the suburbs, and was waiting for a car, when she heard a shrill young voice call out—"Miss Wyngate—say! Miss Wyngate!"—and turning she beheld Freddie Tranent hurrying towards her. Despite her resolutions, her heroic determination, the sight of that boy—that woman's boy—gave her a sharp pang.

It was more than she could bear, and she turned away. By and by the car came up, and when she stepped in Freddie also entered. They were the only two occupants as yet. It was not in Natalie not to notice the boy, now she was alone in the car with him.

"Are you going home, Freddie?" she asked.

There was no answer, save a close pressure of the lips and a quick shake of the head.

Natalie glanced at the profile half-turned away from her, and saw the wounded expression.

"Freddie, dear, I didn't mean to hurt you when I didn't answer you when you called. I—was thinking of something else."

"I thought ye didn't want me. Nobody wants me. I dunno what I done to everybody; they want me to keep away all the time."

"But—your mamma—Freddie. Your mamma doesn't want you away, my boy."

"Oh yes, she does. She gave me car fare and sent me away all afternoon. Guess Doc' 'Buckle must be coming. I like him, but ma won't let me be round when he's in."

This was another stab to the listener; but Freddie, wrapped up in his own woes, went on—

"I don't care. When I grow up I'm goin' away somewhere and never come back any more. I hain't anybody that wants me round, and Sam Tuck's dead, and—I think I'll go to the devil. Ma'll be sorry, then."

"Freddie! oh, Freddie!" cried Natalie, snatching the despairing child remorsefully to her bosom, and smothering his surprise with a shower of kisses. "Freddie, boy!—don't, oh, don't! you break my heart. I love you, God up in heaven loves you—and—your mother loves you! she *must* love you, only she is busy sometimes. But you mustn't talk like that. You will grow up a good man some day, and—"

She could go no further, but she held the astonished boy close to her, and wept.

The ring of the car bell announced a passenger coming, and glancing out of the window they saw some one at a distance running up to catch it.

Natalie released Freddie, and wiped her eyes hastily.

"Say," whispered Freddie, "Sam Tuck's gone, and I hain't no chum; will you be my chum?"

"I will be your chum always, always; only be good, Freddie."

"Never you fear! I can be good when I've a mind to—you bet!"

The stranger now set foot on the step, and ere long the car was well filled; but all through, till they reached the terminus, Freddie sat with his hand locked in that of Natalie, and both were comforted. Only once he withdrew his hand, and then it was to slip it into his pocket and fish up therefrom three candies, which he mutely presented to his new chum as a token of his regard.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN AWFUL REVELATION.

MRS Tranent drew a long breath of relief when she heard the hall door shut softly; she divined exactly how it had been; her plan had succeeded beyond her expectations. Her original intention had been to denounce Dr Arbuckle in such a way before Natalie that a separation must inevitably have been the consequence, but the prospect of how the Doctor might take it shook her resolution until it had dwindled down to the simple idea of allowing Natalie to call, and, meeting him there, judge for herself. But even that might have involved unpleasantness, and now she had accomplished her end without a single jar. Miss Wyngate had seen for herself, and had turned away convinced.

"Excuse me one moment, Doctor," said Mrs Tranent, hastily, as she left the room for a little. She *might* have been wrong, it *might* only have been Nicol moving about, whom she had heard; it *might* have been that tease of a boy returned, after she had sent him safely away for the afternoon. To assure herself she slipped to the hall door, opened it slightly ajar and peeped out. She was right. Miss Wyngate was just leaving the foot of the steps and turning to walk away from The Larches. Closing the door noiselessly, she returned to the parlour and said, with becoming gravity—

"If you don't mind, Doctor, I think we would be better in the study, considering what has to be said."

Nicol was a very good servant, but her movements were too noiseless at times for family privacy.

Dr Arbuckle rose and followed Mrs Tranent to the study overlooking the ravine.

"About poor Ramsay," said he, when they were comfortably seated. "You have gathered some new facts, I understand."

Mrs Tranent was a trifle paler when she answered, for the Doctor had taken her at a disadvantage. She had proposed to bring on the subject very differently, but there was nothing for it now but to make the best of the situation, and this she did with her usual native tact.

"No, no new facts—there can be no new facts. I knew all that could be known from the first, but—I did not care to speak of them to you before."

"Oh! I suppose you did not feel quite equal to recalling them when you spoke of him before."

"Yes, just so, Doctor." Here she paused and looked at him for a moment. He was handsome, and the gravity of his countenance which the years had brought but enhanced the charm of his appearance. She must win him, she must be wary in this narration, she must show him how much she had loved him, in withholding what she knew until now.

"Now, at last—I have resolved to tell you all."

"Why, dear me—certainly! Mrs Tranent," exclaimed the Doctor, slightly out of patience. "Why not?"

"Well, I will begin at the beginning now," said Mrs Tranent, picking up a fan and beginning to open it. "Of course you remember the hotel, and how short of accommodation we were in the height of the season? It was so when you were there."

"Well, there came to the hotel a friend of Ramsay's who was willing to share his bed, seeing we had no more room. You also know how quite the correct thing it was to flirt with the barmaid; she, being pretty, was quite legitimate game—you remember?"

Her sarcasm provoked a curt nod from the Doctor.

"Well, *this* arrival, this friend of Ramsay's, he of course followed suit, but unfortunately the barmaid took to him and liked him."

Dr Arbuckle had hard work to repress the grim smile which parted his lips at this avowal.

"Just as you took to me," he felt tempted to say, but this was not a barmaid, this was Mrs Tranent of The Larches, so he was politely silent.

"I liked him, indeed I may as well speak the truth, I loved him better than any man I have ever met since. One night, when I knew he was going away, I slipped down when all the house was quiet, intending to leave a little gift on the table for him when he got up in the morning. The window blind was drawn up, and the moon was shining bright—Ramsay and he lay sound asleep. I put my little gift on the table, and was slipping out again when I was startled by a sudden movement, and fled for dear life, leaving the door open. I was so afraid I had been discovered. By and by I slipped back to shut the door as I had found it, when peeping in through the crack, I saw—"

Here Mrs Tranent leant back, and held up the fan before her face. The Doctor wondered what was coming next, but kept silence.

"I saw," she continued, laying down the fan and looking at him tensely, "I saw that man *murdering Ramsay*."

“What?” shouted the Doctor, startled out of his expectant quiet.

“Hush! Dr Arbuckle; my servants must not hear this,” said the lady calmly. “Be patient, and I will tell you all. I saw the man with his knees upon his breast and his fingers on his throat, strangling him, choking him just as you choked yon mad dog.”

“Good Heavens! You roused the house, of course?” asked the Doctor.

“No; I could do nothing—I was so paralysed, so benumbed—I did not know what I was doing. I could not understand what he was doing to Ramsay. I remember I crawled to my own room, but I couldn’t stay there, I felt sick with fear; and yet I half thought they were only playing, fooling with each other. I dressed myself, and came down stairs again, this time determined to find out the meaning of such a horrible pantomime; but when I came to the door all was still, save for a heavy snoring. I went right into the room, and there were the two, fast asleep, Ramsay at the back of the bed in the shade, and the man, my lover, with his face to the moon, sleeping calmly, as soundly as a child. I did not know what to make of it. I stood for a full quarter of an hour wondering what I had better do, watching the calm face of the man I loved. Then it occurred to me what an ass I should make myself, and what should I waken him for? They had only been fooling, they had not been asleep when I had entered the room, and I began to suspect had got up this scene for my benefit. So I slipped out, shutting the door softly behind me, and lay down on the bed, dressed as I was, thinking what a silly fool I had been. In the morning I was wakened about six o’clock by a

fearful hubbub, voices of men, screams of women, and some one calling—‘Send for a policeman.’ Instantly I jumped up, and you imagine my feelings when I was told that Ramsay had been found dead, strangled to death in bed, and his bedfellow gone! I was horrified beyond measure, but I kept my own counsel. I never until this moment told what I saw.”

“Excuse me, Mrs Tranent, but I must say your conduct was very reprehensible. You ought at once to have told what you saw.”

“And ruined my character for ever? No, thank you! Besides—”

“Besides what, Mrs Tranent?”

“I loved the man who did it,” she breathed, with downcast eyes.

“Humbug!” cried the Doctor, forgetting himself. “I tell you your duty was to have laid information at once against that man.”

“He did it in his sleep. It was the act of a somnambulist,” said Mrs Tranent, firmly, but pale to the very lips.

“Ah, how do you know that?” demanded the Doctor, in great excitement.

“That was the opinion of a celebrated physician who gave evidence to that effect before the Procurator-Fiscal.”

“But then, why did the murderer go away? Was there no attempt made to arrest him?”

“No one could tell where he had gone, no trace of him could be found.”

“And on what grounds could any physician presume to say that it was the act of a somnambulist.”

"I suggested that it must have been so. I gave evidence how friendly they had always been—that they had retired the best of friends, and there was no robbery or other motive."

"You ought to have told the truth."

"You forget, Doctor," said Mrs Tranent, appealingly, "you forget one thing."

"What is that?" asked Dr Arbuckle, looking at her sternly.

"I loved the somnambulist," she answered, dropping her eyes again.

The Doctor turned towards the ravine with an inward expression of disgust. It was awful the thought of Ramsay having been done to death in this manner, and no attempt made to arrest the perpetrator of the deed, all for the sake of a piece of sentiment on the part of this woman. He took an intense dislike to her as he stood gazing, without seeing anything, down into the glooms of the ravine. That she should have known of this all these years, and never once hinted of it!—that such a thing should be possible!—although, of course, cases of the kind were well enough known to have occurred. The psychological aspect of the deed began to interest him now.

"What data had the physician to reason from in his adoption of your suggestion—your theory of somnambulism?" he demanded, turning suddenly round to Mrs Tranent.

"He held that it was the brain reproducing the action of the preceding day."

"How?—in what way? how was this lover of yours engaged the day previous?"

"He strangled a mad Newfoundland dog with his own hands, and in the same way," said Mrs Tranent, looking at him steadily and significantly.

For a moment the Doctor returned her steady gaze; then a sudden greyness overspread his face, his eyes distended with horror, he swayed as if about to fall. Mrs Tranent, in alarm, started from her chair and sprang to him in affright.

"Edward, oh, Edward! don't look so, it is so long ago, and no one knows but me," she pleaded; but her voice recalled him to himself and suddenly clutching hold of her arm, he demanded sternly—

"Woman! what do you mean by all this masquerading? Do you dare to say that I was the person you saw strangling my friend?"

"It was *you*, Edward Arbuckle, who killed Ramsay," she replied solemnly. "It is as true as I have to meet God in judgment."

He dropped her arm and stood looking at her dumbly. The knowledge was too great, too sudden to comprehend. He who had made the study of the brain his life-work, whose favourite theory was that such acts could be done without the cognizance of the doer, who would have taken it all as a matter of course, another instance merely, had it come under his observation, was felled as with a murderous blow, with the knowledge that he himself had, irresponsibly, done such a deed. Moreover, he irresistibly felt that the accusation must be true. He saw the truth in the face of the woman before him; he understood now that indefinable familiarity which had annoyed him so often, that sense of power which Mrs Tranent unconsciously manifested when in his presence, and which he

had ascribed to her ability and undoubted cleverness. It was the knowledge of this undivulged horror which gave her this spurious superiority, this assumption of equality, which he instinctly repudiated in spite of her wealth and acquired manners. God! that his should have been the fingers which stopped the breath of life in the friend of his youth! His, and no other—he felt it was true—too true. But the truth must be faced, and, not to be overcome, must be borne as becomes a man to bear.

“Mrs Tranent,” he said, after a space, and speaking with a voice unlike his own, “of course you can understand what a fearful—what a terrible revelation this is to me, to be told that my friend died by my hand. I must leave you now—I must get home and think over the whole thing. I—”

“Edward! promise me you will do no harm to yourself. It was all a dream, an evil dream; you were not aware of it. Promise me you will not seek to harm yourself on that account—I will keep the secret.”

“What do you mean by harming myself?” he asked bluntly.

“That you will not attempt your own life,” she faltered; thoroughly frightened at the expression of his face; thoroughly afraid of what she had done.

The Doctor smiled grimly.

“Keep your mind at ease on the subject. Cowardice is not one of my peculiarities, and I have always held the suicide to be a coward. I propose to live and bear all life has in store for me. It has been pleasant hitherto—now—I must grapple the ills. To-morrow I will come back at this same hour, and get all the other particulars. Now, I must go.”

As he spoke he strode to the door, leaving Mrs Tranent repentant and distressed at her own work. He did not even turn to say good-bye; and though she hurriedly touched the bell for Nicol to attend the door, it had shut with a bang upon his retreating figure before she could reach it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“HER WORDS HAD OTHER ISSUE THAN SHE WILLED.”

DR Arbuckle had said that he would call the following day on Mrs Tranent in order to hear further particulars concerning this awful knowledge which had come to him, but he could not wait till then. He had driven straight to visit a patient after he left; but he felt he could not conscientiously visit another in his present state of mind. So, turning his horse's head, he drove to the house of a fellow-physician and requested him to visit his patients for him that day, assigning absence on urgent business as a reason for this brotherly request. Then he went straight home.

“A young lady brought this parcel for you, Doctor,” were the first words which greeted him when he had hung up his coat and entered the parlour.

“All right,” was his reply, uttered from sheer force of habit as he sank into his chair, while Mrs Watson closed the door on him. He did not once glance in the direction of the parcel, which lay in front of the bookcase. In fact, he had not heard what it was his housekeeper really did say. She had uttered some commonplace words about a parcel, and he had answered “all right,” not thinking of it at all. His mind was too full of this trouble which had suddenly encompassed him as with a cloud, to pay any attention to everyday matters such as these. For like another—a second blow—he remembered Natalie, and that he must give her up. He could not ask any

woman to share a life clouded by such a deed. What a helpless creature was man, despite his boasted learning! the bondsman of heredity, the sport of circumstance. Less than a year ago how puffed up he had been that he had been able to minister to a mind diseased, to subdue madness, to call back a wandering soul to life and reason. And all the while this—*this* had been true of himself! He could not rest; he must know more of it; every detail and circumstance connected with the horror.

Mrs Tranent was both startled and relieved when some two hours later she again saw the Doctor coming through the grounds of The Larches up towards the door. She had been in an agony of fear and apprehension ever since he had gone off in such a hurry. She was totally incapable of understanding Dr Arbuckle. She thought that he would be in mortal dread of the affair becoming public, that his first thought would be his reputation, and that to preserve it intact he would be only too glad to renew their friendship on the old basis. That he should be so "cut up," as she expressed it, about the deed itself, irrespective of consequences, that he should actually abhor himself because of it, she could not, it was not in her, to believe. What was there to be so wretched about? Of course it was terrible, but he couldn't help it—and then no one knew about it—no one need ever know. Was she not ready to console him, to comfort him, to marry him, and so bury it for ever? She got out of patience with him as she thought how desperately he had taken it to heart.

"You must pardon me for intruding again, Mrs Tranent, but I must know about this horrible business.

Who was the physician who gave evidence at the Fiscal inquiry?"

"It was Dr Macintosh, of Edinburgh. He happened to be staying with a friend in the village at the time!"

"Dr Macintosh! Dr Macintosh!" exclaimed the astounded man, raising his hand to his forehead as he sat lost in new wonder. Dr Macintosh and himself had been exchanging friendly letters for some time past, that gentleman having opened the correspondence by writing to compliment him on some papers he had written to the *Lancet* "On the Functions of the Brain." Here was a strange coincidence! a new revelation! A revelation, however, which carried no little comfort to him, and which helped him to the formation of a resolution which in his present chaotic state of mind, was nebulous as yet.

"But how was it that I was not pursued?"

"Because you sailed from Glasgow to Australia on the same day, and I was the only one who knew that. Ramsay and I—and he could not tell."

"You were no doubt kind—you meant kindly, Mrs Tranent, but it was very cruel."

"I fail to see it in that light," said Mrs Tranent. "On the contrary, you show an ingratitude I am certainly surprised at. Besides we all thought you were dead."

"Dead!—how?"

"A week after Ramsay was buried, the body of a man, whose face was battered by dashing against the rocks, was washed ashore by the great storm, and it was identified as Edward Arbuckle."

"How? In what way did it resemble me?"

"It had a full suit of your clothes on, and in the pocket was found a letter from Ramsay to you?"

"Great Heavens!" cried Dr Arbuckle, "that must have been that poor man who raved me for some clothing, and I gave him my light suit. I never liked it; it didn't fit, and I gave it to him. The letter must have been in the pocket."

"Very likely. I myself never doubted that it was you and it was no little sorrow to me, I assure you. I was thunderstruck when I saw Edward Arbuckle, M.D., on a door plate in Toronto here one day in passing. Still, I never dreamed it could be you—till—till I saw you. Then I knew you at once."

The Doctor was sitting with his elbow on the table, his hands clasped across his forehead, listening while Mrs Tranent spoke.

"Terrible! terrible!" he muttered after long silence, then starting up he said quietly—"Well—I shall go now. I shall get Fairchild to attend to my patients till I return, if I ever do return."

"Why!—where are you going, Doctor?—what are you going to do?" cried Mrs Tranent, in no small alarm, and wishing she had never spoken.

"To Scotland, to report myself to the Fiscal, of course. I owe it to myself to do this; and I owe it also to Miss Wyngate."

"To Miss Wyngate! And what, pray, do you not owe to me?—to me, who have spared you—the gallows, perhaps?"

The Doctor looked at her silently; well nigh distraught between one thing and another.

"Speak man!" she burst out in a fury of passion.

"What is Miss Wyngate compared to me? Has she loved you as I have done? Has she humbled and made so little of herself as to tell you so, as I have done? Has she helped you into a paying practice, introduced you to society, knowing your dark secret all the time? You dare mention Miss Wyngate in my presence? Oh, Edward!" and here she suddenly dropped at his feet and and clasped her arms about his knees, sobbing violently. "Edward! have pity on me as I have had on you! I cannot live and see you marry another woman; you belong to me—you are mine! mine! mine!"

Oppressed as he was with his own trouble; annoyed, humiliated, ashamed, by the *abandon* of the miserable woman at his feet, he nevertheless stooped, and gently raising her, placed her in a chair, and said with professional firmness—

"Look here, Mrs Tranent—you have been kind, very kind, acting I believe up to your best light. But love cannot be bought or compelled even by the strongest obligations of gratitude. For any kindness you may have felt towards me, for what you may have done in your own way to further my interests, believe me I can be grateful. But this is another matter. There is but one woman in the world for me, and that woman is not you. It is not likely that I can ever hope to marry her now, but that fact cannot in any way alter my feelings to her. As for that regretted flirtation with you when I had scarce attained manhood—forget it—and remember that you have since been married to a different party altogether. Forgive me if I hurt; if I wound it is to cure. This must be a *final* understanding."

The handkerchief was still at Mrs Tranent's eyes, but she said very distinctly from underneath it—

“You shall never marry Miss Wyngate—*never*—I shall take good care of that.”

The Doctor made no answer—he merely took up his hat and gloves and prepared to go.

“Stay!” cried Mrs Tranent, starting up and confronting him with blazing eyes, “don't you dare to tell her that I sued you and was refused—that I knelt to you and was rejected—rejected after all I had done. You shall never marry her or any other woman—*never*. The day in which you give yourself up to the Fiscal I shall report myself too. I, who saw it all—I shall tell a very different story from yours—I shall tell the Fiscal—I shall swear you murdered him—murdered him with malice aforethought, and for jealousy of *me*.”

“Good God!” cried the Doctor, appalled at the savage fury of the woman, “you are going mad surely.”

“Mad am I? Yes, but you'll find a method in my madness. Oh, yes! you'll sail over to the old country and clear yourself of this crime, and come back to marry her? Not if I know it. When you go I go too. There, there is the door—go—never enter it again; but beware! you will find me a determined woman when I like. Go!”

As the Doctor passed out of the grounds with grave and troubled countenance he met Dr Bruno, whose wife had died some two months back, coming in. Dr Bruno raised his hat blandly, but Dr Arbuckle frowned and strode on. Mrs Tranent at the window caught a glimpse of Bruno's heavy figure among the trees, flew upstairs to her dressing-room, and rang imperatively for Nicol.

“Tell Dr Bruno when he comes to the door that I am engaged, but if he will wait ten minutes or so I will be glad to see him,” she said in quiet tones through the door which she had locked, and the door bell ringing just then, Nicol politely delivered her message.

Dr Bruno would wait—there was no hurry—and when some twenty minutes later the lady descended to the drawing-room, the good Doctor could not disguise the admiration he felt, for Mrs Tranent to-night excelled herself in womanly sweetness and urbanity of manner, and looked positively radiant.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Faith gone—trust dead,
I loved on still the same."—BROWNING.

MISS Wyngate had brought Freddie home to her room, had laden him with fruit, candies, and an illustrated "*Robinson Crusoe*," which she bought on her way back, and then she went half-way home with him, inviting him to come and see her some other day. It was a relief to herself to be able to make the child happy, for she had come to have a secret misgiving that Freddie did not find *The Larches* the home it ought to have been to him.

On her way back to the hospital she was followed and overtaken by a quick heavy footstep, and glancing up at the figure brushing hastily past her, she recognised Dr Arbuckle, returning home. The blood rushed to her face, and a singing noise began in her ears; but she conquered the feeling, and something like resentment again strengthened her as she thought how lengthened had been his stay. That he had hurriedly passed her by without recognition was but another proof of all she had heard and seen, also an indication that he was not quite lost to all sense of manly feeling.

Miss Stobie was in her room when she got back.

"Miss Wyngate, I am just waiting for you. What is it, dear? What is troubling you? It is something, I know."

"Nothing; oh, nothing, I am quite well really. I have been half-way to The Larches with Freddie Tranent."

"I don't like that boy's mother—I never did. I can't account for it; but I don't like her," burst out Miss Miss Stobie, with unusual fervour.

"She is a very stylish-looking woman," observed Natalie, quietly laying off her hat.

But there was an air of studied reticence which did not escape the quick observation of Miss Stobie. She also noticed in her face the expression of one who has been stunned by some sudden shock—a passive endurance of hidden pain.

A lover's quarrel was her first guess, but Dr Arbuckle was not that style of man, nor was Natalie the kind of woman, to quarrel.

"Well, I suppose I shall have to let you alone then, but I think you may have trusted me with anything that may be troubling you," she said preparing to leave the room.

Suddenly Natalie caught her about the neck and burst into tears.

"Don't be angry, Miss Stobie," she managed to say to the astonished nurse. "You are the only friend I have in the world. Some day I will tell you all—but not now; I couldn't now. Only this, it's all over."

"All over! Natalie! Dr Arbuckle?"

"I have sent everything back—everything! See," she said piteously, holding out the finger which had held the engagement ring.

"Then you have done a wrong and cruel thing," exclaimed Miss Stobie, almost snappishly; "he does not deserve to be treated so."

The head nurse's affection for the Doctor was almost motherly; but Natalie was silent.

"Why have you done such a thing? How could you jilt him so?"

"Don't think too hardly of me, Miss Stobie," pleaded Natalie.

"I think it is a shame of you, a downright shame, to treat any man in such a manner. What was your reason for it?"

"Excuse me, Miss Stobie, if I do not answer you," was the low sad reply; but Miss Stobie, indignant that her favourite should have been so unceremoniously jilted, without apparent cause, curtly said "good-night," and left her.

Natalie was willing to bear all the blame; not one word should escape her lips against him; faith was shaken, trust destroyed, but she loved—she could not help it—she loved him still. Alas! she must love him to the end of her life, the life he had made so blessed, so desolate.

Next morning the mail brought her a letter addressed in his handwriting. She hesitated to open it. It was no doubt an answer to the return of his gifts; but why need she prolong the pain—she would send it back unopened. And yet—yes—she would have one last word from him, one last word before the long silence that must follow, and with trembling fingers she opened the letter and read—

"My dear Miss Wyngate,—An obstacle, the nature of which I cannot bring myself to explain to you now, has suddenly arisen to prevent our union—the union which I had promised myself so much happiness in. I cannot trust myself to see you, lest I might break through the

resolution I have formed; but I think if you knew all, you would pity me and forgive me. Of one thing, however, be assured, that come what may you are the first and only woman I have ever loved or can love. Nevertheless, I set you free from your engagement, this being the only course open to me at present as an honourable man.
—Faithfully to death,

“EDWARD ARBUCKLE.”

The colour flushed and paled again on the face of the girl as she read this strange letter. And a thrill of joy ran through her as she read his solemn declaration that he loved her yet. Still, what could it mean? Either he was thoroughly false or hopelessly entangled with this woman; and she—what did she herself know of the wiles of the world that she should judge him. He loved her—ah, yes! in spite of all—she felt he loved her, and she would not deceive him. She would never speak with him again, but she would write one line or two to say that she knew all—and forgave.

And this was the little note which Dr Arbuckle found lying on the parcel in front of the bookcase, the parcel he had not once noticed till now.

“I know all, having seen Mrs Tranent and heard an account of the past from her lips. As an honourable man you could not have done otherwise; and it is better for us not to meet again. You will have received the parcel containing the ring and other gifts, which I return.

Farewell.

“N. W.”

This was the unkindest cut Fate had given him yet. That Mrs Tranent should have gone and told Natalie of the terrible thing which had happened him so long ago;

that she should on that account have thrown him over so readily, sank into his heart like lead. How cold and cruel women were! He could expect nothing else from Hetty Tranent, but from Natalie! To think she should have at once stripped his ring from her finger, returned his photograph and books immediately, without a word of sympathy or regret for the awful misfortune of which he had been the victim, was so hard, so cruel, so unlike her, that a feeling of despair seized on him—a feeling of hatred and fury towards the woman who had for her own ends divulged now what she had kept so long. He could forgive her for informing himself; it was right he should know all that pertained to himself; but that she should have gone and revealed the horrible fact to the woman he loved—the last woman in the world he would have hurt with such a knowledge, was so brutal—he felt like cursing her.

But there—what could not be cured must be endured—he would not shame his manhood, but he could not stay here. He must sell out his practice at once, and deliver himself up to whatever the proper parties chose to do with him; he would not lie a moment longer than he could help under the imputation of having fled the scene of his misfortune that awful morning.

Meanwhile Natalie, pale and quiet, went day after day about her usual duties. Everything was done as punctually and perfectly as though her heart were not bleeding daily, and only saved from breaking altogether by the continual inward iteration of these three words—“He loved me.”

Dr Arbuckle visited no more at the hospital, but a young practioner, who came in his place, told Miss

Stobie, that Dr Arbuckle was going over to the old country on private business, and that he was about to buy out his practice.

Natalie heard nothing of all this. An increasing coolness had sprung up between Miss Stobie and herself ever since that evening, and the little intercourse they had now was purely official. It was an added burden to Natalie, the loss of Miss Stobie's friendship; but still she kept silence. She could not justify herself without vilifying him—and she loved him still.

Miss Stobie noticed her growing thinner and paler day by day; the patient sweetness of her manner touched her, but her resentment was too great to allow a word of regret or sympathy to escape her lips. She had jilted a good man, she had brought suffering on both—let her suffer, she deserved it.

But there came an evening when Miss Stobie opened the door of Natalie's room, crept up softly to where she sat reading, and folding the sad-faced young nurse in a motherly embrace, murmured penitently—

“Oh, my poor, poor girl! my dear Natalie! Will you ever be able to forgive me?”

For it had come to Miss Stobie's ears that the *Devonia* had sailed from New York the previous day, having among the saloon passengers Dr Arbuckle and Mrs Tranent, bound for Glasgow.

CHAPTER XX.

HETTY'S TRUMP CARD FAILS TO WIN.

THE trip to Scotland which Dr Arbuckle and Mrs Tranent were supposed to have taken together caused a little ripple of talk in society circles. Certain it was that the lady had gone off in a hurry, leaving Freddie in the care of Nicol until her return. Certain it was that she had sailed in the same ship with Dr Arbuckle, and, coupling this fact with the well-known friendship of the two, matrimony was the only supposable reason for this social phenomenon. That they would return man and wife no one doubted; the only question in the minds of society people was whether the Doctor would live at The Larches on his return, or whether his wife would remove to his more central residence.

On board the *Devonia*, however, Dr Arbuckle had not the slightest idea that the lady passenger who was an invalid, and kept her state-room, and tipped the stewardess so handsomely, was none other than Mrs Tranent of Toronto.

Not once did she make her appearance during the voyage, and when it ended the Doctor was in too great a hurry to get to his destination in Edinburgh to observe who landed after himself. But while he sped on through the night to Edinburgh, the lady took another train, which landed her within a short distance of a sunny town on the banks of the Clyde,

When Dr Arbuckle introduced himself to Dr Macin-

tosh, a venerable white-haired gentleman, one of the fathers in the profession, he was overwhelmed with the genuine cordiality of his welcome. Dr Macintosh was delighted to meet the man whose professional correspondence had given him so much pleasure and who had so often voiced his own ideas and deductions, but he was not a little surprised to find him so young a man. Judging him from his writings, he had supposed him to be a man of long experience and research, and was surprised to find him not yet thirty-five. It was an added pleasure, and the Doctor was soon deep in an elaborate demonstration of certain new scientific ideas concerning which he had intended writing to his visitor.

"What I wanted chiefly to see you about, Doctor, was a case of somnambulism which happened in Clydeshire some twelve years ago," broke in Arbuckle; suddenly feeling he must get at the subject at once.

"Clydeshire—ah, yes! I remember perfectly well. Now, *there* was an illustration—a case in point—proving clearly what I have just been demonstrating." And here the Doctor sat upright, and placing his finger on his palm, proceeded to get fairly into harness.

"Now, in this case, the young man, who must have been a fellow of nerve and courage, had been abnormally excited throughout the day by an encounter with a mad dog, which he overcame and strangled. During the hours of sleep the brain—"

"Pardon me, Doctor; but can you not recollect the name of the unfortunate who was so—"

Dr Arbuckle could not finish the sentence.

"His name? Ah, let me see," replied the elderly physician, pondering, with his forefinger on his temple; "it

was—ah—why—I believe—yes, I am certain—it was the same as your own. Yes ; Arbuckle was the name. Bless my heart!" he continued, noticing a strange, wan expression on the face of his visitor, "no relation of yours, I hope? It was a sad, a mysterious case."

"No relation, Doctor," answered Dr Arbuckle. Then he paused a moment before he added—"It was I myself!"

In spite of long professional habit, his all but perfect control of facial expression, Dr Macintosh started and looked aghast at the grave, sad face of his visitor. Almost immediately, however, he recovered himself, extended his hand towards him kindly, and said—

"Forgive me; it was the sudden surprise."

Dr Arbuckle accepted the offered clasp, but to the elder physician it was like the grip of a dead hand, it felt so cold and chill.

"You must have some refreshment at once. I am forgetting to be hospitable in my joy at seeing you," Dr Macintosh exclaimed hastily, but his visitor held up a hand in protest.

"Thank you, but I could neither eat nor drink just now; I will be quieter by and by. The knowledge that I had done such an awful deed was only communicated to me about a month ago; and had it been possible for me to get here sooner I should have come and reported myself to the Fiscal at Clydeshire. But I wanted to see you first and get your opinion on the matter. I was told you were summoned there when—when—poor Ramsay was discovered.

"I was. It so happened that I was down on a visit to my brother who is the Fiscal for the County, and who resides in the town. But who told you? Is it possible

you had no idea of what you had—what had happened all these years?"

"Not the remotest idea. I rose early that morning in order to catch the early train from Glasgow. I had bidden him good-bye before we went to sleep, and we promised to write to each other. When I had dressed I felt as if I would like to say good-bye again before going, and I actually stepped to the bedside with that intention. But he was lying so still, in such a profound sleep, as I supposed, I thought I had better not; besides I was late enough. Then I sailed for Australia, but went ashore at Ceylon where I stayed a few weeks, writing to him from thence. As soon as I got to Melbourne I called at the Post Office, but there were no letters from Ramsay, and though I called every day for months, none ever came. Then I went overland *via* San Francisco to Canada, where I have been ever since."

"Then how did you come to know at last?" queried the physician, much interested.

Dr Arbuckle hesitated, but finding he must, he told the Doctor the whole circumstance of his acquaintance with the barmaid from the beginning until the *finale* at The Larches.

Dr Macintosh was profoundly moved. He prided himself on his ability to judge of character; and the face of Dr Arbuckle showed no line which warned him to distrust. Truth and sincerity were in every lineament, there was no mistaking the profound regret which saddened his expression.

"I am glad, very glad, you have come to me. I am gratified that you should have shown such confidence in me, but I must deprecate this idea of going to the Pro-

curator-Eiscal, and raking up what had better be buried in oblivion. As I told you he happens to be my brother. What good end do you expect to serve by this action?"

"I will feel better when legally acquitted; besides, although Mrs Tranent will not, I think, attempt to carry out her threat of denouncing me as a wilful murderer, still, it is nevertheless possible. I wish my name cleared as far as it can be, not only for my own sake, but for the sake of another."

"And that other?"

"The woman I love and have lost," was the answer.

"Well, it seems hard, it *is* hard to suffer for what one is not responsible for; but if you must go, then you will allow me to go with you and introduce you to my brother. I have no doubt he will remember the circumstances."

On the following day Dr Macintosh and Dr Arbuckle entered the office of the Procurator-Fiscal in Clydeshire. The Fiscal himself was a sedate, elderly man, with iron-grey hair and whiskers, and a keen, dark eye. He listened without the smallest wonder or surprise to his brother's narration of the whole circumstances, but not once did he remove his searching look from the grave, firm countenance of Dr Arbuckle.

"And that is all, John," concluded Dr Macintosh. "One of the clearest cases of the brain acting in sleep I have ever known."

"Yes, Andrew, I agree with you now as I did then, but when another party, an eye-witness, comes forward and charges this gentleman with wilful and premeditated murder—what then.

"Mrs Tranent!" exclaimed Dr Arbuckle, growing

ashy white. "Is it possible she can have followed me? Has she really carried out her threat?"

"You know the lady, then?" asked the Fiscal, eyeing him keenly.

"Of course he does!" broke in Dr Macintosh. "You see, John, there is a woman at the bottom of this, as of all other devilment. Not one woman, but two! Stay, let me be your lawyer in this matter," he added, as Dr Arbuckle was about to speak.

"I have given you all the facts with the exception of the feminine interest in the business, and this I withheld only under pressure from Arbuckle here, who has a lingering, old-world chivalry about him where women are concerned. Now, since one of these women has taken the initiative, I must reveal all in his defence."

The Fiscal's face was a study to see, as his brother explained how the lady who had impressed him so much by her beauty, stylish appearance and fine address, was none other than Hetty, the erstwhile barmaid of the hotel. As the explanation proceeded a light broke over his countenance, the look with which he regarded Dr Arbuckle was no longer one of stern inquiry, but of sympathy and respect.

"Well," said he, "this Mrs Tranent is at the hotel staying. Supposing I send for her and ask her to repeat her statements in your presence?"

"Capital!" exclaimed Dr Macintosh, "I should like to see Hetty again. I remember her very well. In fact, it was she who first suggested the idea of a dream-crime."

The Fiscal stepped outside his office for a moment, and returned, and but a few minutes elapsed before

Mrs Tranent, transcendently impressive, sailed up to the Fiscal's desk, which stood in the middle of the room.

"Good-afternoon," she said, smiling her sweetest, when, catching the Fiscal's eye looking significantly behind her, she turned slightly.

"How do you do, Hetty?" said Dr Macintosh, stepping forth from the side of Dr Arbuckle. "Dear me! dear me! why I would never have known you, you are quite the lady. But you should be careful, Hetty, extremely careful; those cosmetics and hair-bleaching acids are dangerous, extremely dangerous. Deaths have been known to happen through the use of them."

Mrs Tranent tried to draw herself up with her usual impressive style, but she could not. Choking with anger she turned to the Fiscal—

"Did you bring me here to be insulted, sir?" she demanded, throwing up her head.

"I brought you here, Mrs Tranent, to ask you to repeat the statement you made and swore to yesterday; the statement which I have here in writing, and which you will please repeat in presence of the accused."

"The accused," she gasped, with pale lips, and eyes wandering about the office. "He is there, directly behind you, madam," observed the Fiscal, and turning she stood face to face with Dr Arbuckle.

"Edward!"

"Dr Arbuckle, if you please," rang out the Doctor, sternly. "My Christian name I reserve for my friends only."

"I think, sir, you are taking me at a very unfair advantage," said the lady to the Fiscal.

"How?"

"You ought to have told me that I was to meet this man."

"Just take this chair, Doctor, if you please," said the Fiscal, ignoring her complaint. "And you, Mrs Trant, I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to stand while you make your statement." So saying, he handed her the book to kiss. With a slight tremor she took it in her hand; but as she raised it to her lips her eyes met those of Dr Arbuckle, and she slowly laid it down again.

"Can I not repeat my statement without this form?" she asked.

"You may," said the Fiscal, with a grim smile, "it is already sworn to."

She began her narration, but she could not avoid the stern challenge in the eyes of Dr Arbuckle, who, with set lips and determined visage, sat looking at her.

Ere long she faltered and stopped.

"Go on," said the Fiscal, referring to her written statement of the day before. "You say here that they were deadly enemies these two?"

"No, that is a mistake—a mistake—let me tell it in my own way," she went on, hurriedly, her eyes unable to remove their gaze from Dr Arbuckle's, who sat suddenly conscious of the same power and fixed determination he had exerted that night while playing to Natalie. His indignation, the concentrated righteous wrath of his whole nature, was blazing in the gaze with which he challenged her to dare tell aught but the truth, to dare lie his life away. "He was his friend; he did it in his sleep; he could not help it; I swear it. What I said yesterday is false, this is the truth. Oh! oh!" she cried, breaking into a wild hysterical shriek, and darting to the

door. But the door was locked, and with his back towards it stood Dr Macintosh with a big, musty looking volume under his arm.

"Gently, gently, Hetty! I have just found the book I was looking for, and which contains the evidence you gave under oath in this same matter twelve years ago."

"I don't want to see you or your book; let me go. I want to have nothing more to do with his affair. I promise never to speak of it again—let him marry whom he will," cried the trembling woman. But the Fiscal quietly said—

"You cannot go yet. People who come and make charges of wilful murder with malice prepense must be prepared to undergo a little of the inconvenience they put others to."

Utterly collapsed, Mrs Tranent sat down upon the nearest chair, and looked with apprehension at the brown tome Dr Macintosh was turning over at the desk, Dr Arbuckle also looking on, white and determined.

"Ah, here we are—*Re-Death of Ramsay, &c.* Yes, here it is—*Hetty Monro, barmaid, testified*, and so forth, and so forth—a very different story indeed, from what you told yesterday."

"But I have told you that was false. I have promised never to mention the thing again. What more do you want?" She was coming to herself again and regaining courage. She had failed, ignominiously failed, but she would brave it out to the end in spite of those terrible eyes of his.

"I'll tell you what more we want, Hetty," said Dr Macintosh, with imperturbable good-humour. "We just want to protect ourselves against a probable repetition

of this accusation, which you yourself have declared to be a lie. Now, you will please observe that I place this sworn statement of yours here—”

“Oh, no, no!” interrupted Mrs Tranent; “destroy that; oh, please destroy it!”

“Sorry not to be able to oblige you, Hetty, but you see you have committed perjury, and are amenable to the law.”

Mrs Tranent turned pale and clasped her hands together with a groan.

“Now, you see, by placing these your two different statements together we will be able to prosecute and condemn you at once, should you ever open your lips either here or in Canada on this subject again.”

“I never will, be sure of that!” exclaimed the humbled woman.

“Of course you won’t; a term in jail with hard labour is no joke, I assure you; though, by heaven! I think you deserve it. The woman who could take advantage of such a sad misfortune to foist an accusation of abhorred crime on the individual afflicted in such a manner, deserves all the law can mete out. Unlock the door, John.”

The Fiscal turned the key in the door, and opening it wide, Mrs Tranent passed out. In another hour she had taken the train for Glasgow, and before the end of the week, had sailed for Montreal.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CUP OF COLD WATER WHICH BROUGHT ITS REWARD.

ON her way home Hetty Tranent had ample time and opportunity to reflect. She was not at all a woman incapable of reflection, although she had, by her desperate infatuation for Dr Arbuckle, been hurried on to the very verge of crime. When, as a young woman, this fortune had come to her, her first thought, her one ambition had been to become "a lady." The education she had was not bought with the idea of developing her mind, or enabling her to stand on a higher intellectual plane, but in order to be able to talk fluently and pass muster in society. She had never once risen to the idea that a lady is a "bread-giver," that she must not only appear to be, but be. Instead of giving, she had set out to take all that life could give or money afford. What of her money she had parted with was only a price paid for praise and popularity; all she did was from some ulterior motive, her benevolence was a sham. What now availed her beauty, her accomplishments, her position in society, her wealth, since they could not afford her the one thing she wanted above all else, the man she had set her heart on? Not only had she failed to win his love—she had actually brought herself into uttermost humiliation and contempt by her efforts to separate him effectually from the woman he loved. She felt now that had she but risen to the height of true, unselfish womanhood, she might at least

have earned his respect, and retained his friendship. Now in her mad selfishness, she had lost all, even her own self-respect, such as it had been ; she had sunk to the level of a perjurer.

Yet it was from this low level that Hetty Tranent, for the first time in her life, began to rise. High she could never soar, she was not so constructed, but she had got such a thorough humbling as had brought her at last to the safe plane of common sense. Physical ease and comfort her money could buy her, but she now saw that was all. With a penitent memory she began to think of Freddie, her boy whom she had always put aside with impatient words and gestures ; whom she had proposed to send away from her altogether, rather than have the bother of caring for him. Her aching heart remembered his childish, wistful appeals to her, and now what would she not have given for the sound of his frank, merry laugh. Ah, well ! from henceforth she would devote herself to the task of being an exemplary mother. Freddie would not need to complain any more that he was lonely.

When she arrived at Montreal she telegraphed to Nicol that she would be home on the half-past seven express ; and when the train arrived, Brown was at the depot with the phaeton.

She could not understand the peculiar look with which her coachman regarded her—surely he could know nothing of her errand to Scotland. Why did the fellow stare at her with a kind of pity in his looks ? She had been about to ask him, courteously, how all had gone on in her absence, but now she only said, curtly—

“ Drive home as quick as you can.”

She was anxious to get home to the only thing she

could call her own—the only thing that loved her, her neglected boy.

“Where’s Freddie, Nicol?” she asked, the moment she entered the house. “Tell him I want him here at once.”

Nicol, who, Mrs Tranent observed, wore a black print gown, and had a black ribbon in her cap, only drew back a step, and, as if afraid, stammered—

“Please ’um—Master Freddie—oh, ma’am! Didn’t you get the letter?”

“No. What letter? Who wrote to me?”

“Please ’um, Miss Wyngate. Which she do be a haingel, ma’am.”

“That’s all right, Nicol,” returned the mistress, coldly.

“But that’s not what I want to know; I want Freddie. Go and find him at once.”

Nicol clasped her hands, and looked up into her face beseechingly.

“Please ’um, Master Freddie is buried these two weeks now.”

A loud ringing shriek rang through the house, and brought the cook up in affright to the parlour, where Mrs Tranent had sunk upon one of the couches, uttering shriek after shriek as the truth pressed itself home. Surely, surely, God had punished her, was the conviction that came sharply home to her; and forgetting all but the child she had cared so little for till now, she gave way to an abandon of grief and remorse. Her repentance, her awakening affection, had come too late.

Only one week had elapsed after Miss Stobie had made the *amende honorable* to Natalie, when Dr Dewar, the young practitioner who had succeeded to Dr Arbuckle’s

practice, called on Miss Stobie, and requested to see Nurse Wyngate.

"It's a little boy who is down with scarlet fever, and keeps calling for Miss Wyngate incessantly," explained the Doctor. "I was wondering if you, Miss Stobie, could arrange to allow Nurse Wyngate to go down and see him. Of course the malady is infectious, a bad type indeed, but the child's mother, Mrs Tranent, is away from home—and—"

"Is it Freddie?" asked Natalie, who had entered, noiselessly.

"Yes, my dear," answered Miss Stobie.

Natalie returned her look with one of mute appeal.

"You have never had scarlet fever, have you?" asked Miss Stobie.

"No; but I wouldn't mind that. I would so much like to go and nurse Freddie. Who is attending to him now?"

"Only the housemaid who was left in charge of him; but she knows nothing. She is very ignorant," said Dr Dewar.

"Miss Stobie, can it be done? Can I be spared?" pleaded Natalie. With quick wit her superior turned to Dr Dewar—

"I'll tell you, Doctor, we will consult about it, and if Nurse Wyngate can be spared and wishes to go, of course she will come."

The Doctor bowed and left, and Miss Stobie, laying her hand on Natalie's shoulder, looked into her face searchingly.

"My poor child! Would you really really care to go to *that woman's* house and nurse her boy?"

"Poor Freddie! poor, poor Freddie;" was the sad reply. "Oh, Miss Stobie, try to let me go. I ought, I must, I will feel the better for it."

Miss Stobie looked at the earnest, sad face of the young nurse, which had been, if possible, more thin and wan during the last week, and sighed. "It's too bad, too bad!"

"I think the new probationer could, with Nurse Watson's help, do my work," suggested Natalie.

"Why, do you propose staying with him altogether?"

"I will stay till he is well," answered the nurse, quietly; "if you consent."

"Then, go, and take all sensible precautions against infection," said Miss Stobie, understanding, and bending she kissed her on the forehead with a whispered—

"God bless you, my girl!"

There was a great bond between these two.

"I knowed you'd come," said Freddie, looking up with heavy eyes at the touch of Natalie's cool hand; "I knowed it. Say, you wont go away and leaveme, will you?"

"No, Freddie, dear, I'll stay with you all the time," answered Natalie, with a tender tremolo in her voice which she could not help. She had seen at a glance that he was very, very ill.

For five nights and days she nursed him, never leaving the room, and lying down only at intervals when he was asleep. In his delirium the childish voice rattled on fitfully about all his boyish affairs, and now it was Sam Tuck, and now Dr Arbuckle, to whom he was talking, and now he was telling some one how he was going away, away somewhere, never to come back again, because ma nor nobody wanted to have him round here.

He was very weak now, and when he opened his eyes, he saw Natalie sitting by his beside holding his small hand in hers.

"Have I got to go, Miss Wyngate?" he asked.

"Go where, Freddie dear?"

"I dunno—where Sam Tuck went."

"Take this beef tea, dear," said Natalie, evading the question. Freddie took a little, a very little, but as usual, he was not to be put off.

"Maybe nobody won't want me round up there no more than here. It'll be terr'ble lonesome," he sighed, looking wistfully out of the window, through which he could see blue glimpses of sky through the trees.

Natalie could scarce control herself. It was terrible to hear this hungry young soul dreading to enter the other world lest it should find as little love there as it had found here. What could she say to comfort him, to assure him?

Presently, with a strong effort, she said, in a low, tender voice—

"Freddie, dear, when little boys and girls die, there are beautiful beings, spirits whom we cannot see, just as we cannot see the air though it is all about us, and they carry children's souls to a happy country, where the Lord Jesus is."

"But will He want to have me, though?" queried Freddie, with all his old eagerness.

"Yes, oh, yes!" answered Natalie, with the conviction which she felt. She had now firm ground to stand on.

"Listen, dear. When Jesus lived in this world He had a great deal to think about, you know, and always

when He felt lonely He prayed. That is, He went away by Himself to a solitary place and spoke right up to his Father, who He knew was there, though He couldn't see Him no more than you could."

"Why! Did Jesus feel lonesome like I did?" exclaimed the child, in wonder.

"Yes, indeed, Freddie. The story of His life is full of the loneliness He felt. And to show you how little He was understood, one day, when He was sitting talking to some men, one or two mothers who thought a great deal of Jesus, so much so that they thought His very touch would do their children good, came with their little boys and girls to Him."

"And what did He say? Did He tell 'em to go away and not bother Him?" asked Freddie, unconsciously quoting from his own experience.

"No, indeed! The men He was talking to called to them to go away and not bother such a man as He with children; but Jesus turned and called the little boys and girls and lifted them up, one on each knee, and said—'No, I love the children; don't send them away. Heaven is made up of children and people who are as little children in spirit; as simple and trustful and loving.' And then He kissed them and blessed them, and told the people for all time to let the children always come to Him."

The boy smiled, and uttered a sigh of perfect content.

"Well, I'll tell Him you tole me so."

These were Freddie's last words. He closed his eyes, still holding Natalie's hand, and his breathing became laboured for an hour or so. Then for a time he rested more easily, but not once was the small hand withdrawn,

and as the hour of midnight tolled from the Cathedral tower the unseen messengers bore him hence. The nurse's task was over, and her reward was with her. In striving to comfort the child she had assuaged her own grief, her own loneliness, and as with brimming eyes she laid her thin hand on the sunken eyelids, like a heavenly strain of music there floated through her mind the assurance of the children's Eternal Friend—

“For I say unto you, the angels do always behold the face of my Father in Heaven.”

CHAPTER XXII.

FOR many weeks Natalie had lain at death's door, and now, though convalescent, she made but slow progress toward recovery. For grief, overwork, and want of sleep, Nature had revenged herself, but youth again triumphed, although the lassitude of spirit still retarded strength.

Every day for the last week, Mrs Tranent, draped in crape from head to foot, had called at the hospital to inquire for Miss Wyngate. The nurse's devotion to the boy in his mother's absence was talked of everywhere, and the visits of condolence that mother had received were many. People were angry with themselves for thinking that Mrs Tranent had gone off with Dr Arbuckle; why! it was only a common coincidence their sailing in the same ship. There was not the first idea of matrimony in connection with the trip, of that they were now convinced. It was merely a bit of gossip. Indeed, Mrs Tranent protested honestly that she knew nothing of Dr Arbuckle's movements, did not know when, if ever, he would return to Toronto. It was a matter of wonder to them now how such an absurd rumour could have originated.

"I think you may be able to see Miss Wyngate to-day," said Miss Stobie to her the fifth time she called. "I told her you wanted to see her, to thank her for her care of the boy, and she thinks she will be strong enough now. Just come this way. And with a coldness, an

aversion to Mrs Tranent which she could not, and never tried to overcome, she led the way to the room where Natalie sat bolstered up with pillows.

The sight of the woman who had caused all her trouble could not move Natalie now as before; but still there was a certain soreness, a faint vibration of the old pain which she first looked at her.

Mrs Tranent sat down and instantly burst into tears—genuine tears. She was really touched by the sight of the girl she had so cruelly deceived, and who had made such an unlooked for return. She also wept for Freddie and for herself—for pity for herself and the failure she had been. When she looked up from her black bordered handkerchief they were alone, Miss Stobie and the nurse having retired.

“Miss Wyngate, you are an angel, and I—I have been a devil,” she said, with a vehement outburst; “but I’m not all bad. I have come to make amends. How could you—oh, how could you have nursed my boy as you did, after the way I deceived you?”

“You did not deceive, Mrs Tranent; it was best for me to know the truth, and about Freddie—indeed, I loved Freddie; he was a dear, lovable boy,” was the meek answer.

Something like a groan escaped Mrs Tranent’s lips; and after a pause she said, slowly, as though compelling herself to the task—

“I *did* deceive you, Miss Wyngate. Dr Arbuckle cares nothing for me, and never did, nor ever will. You are the woman he loves—the only woman he ever cared for.”

There was little blood in Natalie’s system, but what

there was made a faint show in her cheek when she heard this.

“But I saw—I came to the Larches that day, and—”

“Yes, yes, I know. I knew you were there, and I pretended all that. He *did* give me the little ring, but that was when he was a boy, a little flirtation before I married my husband. He never meant anything; but I was wild to marry him, and did all I could to win him; but it was you he loved. He told me so.”

Natalie panted for breath a minute, and then said—

“But he wrote to me, giving me up. He wrote with his own hand. You must be mistaken, Mrs Tranent. He said there was an obstacle. If that obstacle was not—you—then what is it?”

“It was something he had done when I knew him long ago—something he had no idea of until I told him.”

“But—how could he do a thing and not know until you told him. Excuse me—I do not understand you.”

“He—you will not be hurt if I tell you the truth, Miss Wyngate?” asked Mrs Tranent, humbly.

“N—no, I think not—not now. You say he told you he loved me—is that the truth?”

“God’s truth, Miss Wyngate.”

“Then nothing can hurt me—nothing, so long as this is true. He is the man I believed him to be. Say on. Nothing can make any difference now.”

A heavy sigh of regret escaped Mrs Tranent.

“It would have made no difference to me; although some people would think it a very serious matter indeed. I may as well tell you at once.”

Thereupon Mrs Tranent, in clear and concise language, told the whole episode of Ramsay’s death, her discovery

of Arbuckle in Toronto, the services she had rendered him, all up to the day when she sent him to her door. Whatever she felt, whatever was her motive, she certainly did not spare herself.

"But still, since he would not marry me, I was determined he should not return and marry you—or any other woman. I found out when he was going and I followed him, and denounced him as a wilful and premeditated murderer."

Natalie, who was sitting staring at her in horror and aversion, uttered a cry at this avowed wickedness.

"Yes, I did it. I knew it was wrong, but I had still the hope that, to save himself, he would come to me and marry me, if it was only to shut my mouth from testifying against him. A wife cannot testify against her husband. It was my last desperate hope, and I risked it. Then, when they insisted I should repeat my statement before him, I tried, but couldn't. He fixed these terrible eyes of his upon me, and dared me to do it. I couldn't—I told the truth, told them he was asleep and knew nothing—told them I had perjured myself. All this I did to gain that man, and failed—failed—and became a criminal—all because he would not be turned away from you. Don't interrupt me," she said, holding up her exquisitely black-gloved hand. "I am going to be honest and true for once; I am going to make you respect me, at least, for you will know all and see that I am what I am, but doing all a woman can to make amends. Don't think it hasn't cost me more than you will ever guess to come and confess this to you. You see the confidence I have in you—I have placed my reputation in your hands—do with it as you will."

"Your confidence will never be abused, Mrs Tranent. I can understand how easy it was for you to love him so—even to madness."

"But I don't think I could have brought myself to it if you hadn't done as you did to Freddie, and suffered for it so. I have lost the only thing in the world that cared for me, and I find that money is but a small factor in the sum of human happiness, after all. But I am determined to be honest for once, to cast off all society sham for once, and for once do what is right. Say one word of kindness, of forgiveness to me, Miss Wyngate—say that I am not quite beyond the pale of woman's respect."

Natalie had softened considerably as Mrs Tranent went on. She could not like her, but she tried to understand; the woman's allusion to Freddie as the only thing in the world she cared for touched her. She knew too well how it felt to be alone in the world.

Mrs Tranent had been sitting on a chair opposite her, with the little round table between them, and Natalie, not to be out-done in magnanimity, said—

"Will you please lift back that table for me?"

Mrs Tranent lifted back the table humbly, and Natalie caught her hand as she came back.

"Come here," she whispered, drawing her down towards her, and kissing her cheek; "let it be a secret between us two. You will go back to society and the world; I will resume my work here. It has been awful—awful—poor fellow! It has been hard upon all three of us; but it will now be buried for ever."

Mrs Tranent tried to be brave, but could not. The tears *would* come. She had risen to this plane only after

a long and bitter struggle with herself, unaided and unadvised by any one. But it was hard, and hurt sore, and she felt desolate.

"Yes," she said, "it will be buried for ever. I will return and take up my life as usual, but I cannot live alone—I shall marry again. I was beginning to tire of my life when I found my old lover, and thought I was in great luck. Now I am more lonely than ever. I have gone in for this sort of life, and will carry it through; but I can't live alone. I am going to accept the offer I have had."

"And I'm sure I will wish you every happiness," said Natalie; scarce able to comprehend this strange, undisciplined nature, this woman who could thus contemplate marrying one man just after her mad, her reckless infatuation for another.

"Well, good-bye, Miss Wyngate. There," said she, handing her the address of Dr Macintosh, in Edinburgh, "that address will find him. I suppose, now, you will want to write?"

"No, I shall not write," answered Natalie.

"May I ask you to come and call on me?" asked Mrs Tranent, with some anxiety. "For appearance sake you know, when you are able."

"The first day I am able to go out I will come straight to The Larches—for Freddie's sake, and for your own sake, Mrs Tranent."

When she was left alone Natalie covered her face with two thin hands and wailed—

"And that I—should have renounced *you* in the day of your calamity."

CHAPTER XXIII.

“Lo now, what hearts have men ! they never mount
As high as woman in her selfless mood.”

THE winter had passed and spring had come, and still Dr Arbuckle stayed on with Dr Macintosh. In fact the latter would not hear of his visitor going away for some time yet. Under one pretext or another he managed to keep him. Now it was his help he wanted with the work he was shortly to publish “On Brain Diseases,” and now it was impossible to go until the next conference was over—and so on ; and his guest, passively pliable, assented ; all the time aware of the shallow pretences wherewith his friend sought to veil his kindness. Dr Arbuckle had no more resistance left. He was a man of broken will and purpose, and at present was fain to drift with the tide, or wherever the winds of circumstance might blow him. The only remnant of his former strength remaining was his honesty and conscientiousness in his work ; of that he could not be divested by any power or circumstance ; the habit of faithful work had become part of himself. So with his old earnestness he worked in conjunction with Dr Macintosh, and their mutual research had been productive of considerable insight, valuable to the profession and to the race. But he worked like a man for whom personal human interest is over and done with ; his bright vigorous, alert manner had given way to a still gentleness, which at times nigh broke the kind heard of the old Doctor.

“I don’t see, Arbuckle, why you need go away at all.

I am getting old now, and at the time you came over I was just thinking where I would be likely to get a partner who could assist me and succeed to my practice. Can't you make up your mind to stay in the Modern Athens? Look at her! isn't she beautiful? the joy of Scotland, and Scotland's sons everywhere! Come, Arbuckle—make up your mind; make your home for life in dear old Edinburgh."

So urged his kindly and energetic host, whose interest, first enlisted by his ability, had now, by knowledge of his personal character and misfortune, developed into sympathy and affection. The Doctor had never been blessed with children, and to him the young man embodied his ideal of a son.

"Make your home here," he repeated, as the two stood looking down upon the city, whose romantic beauty was heightened by the green freshness of the spring.

"Home!—what is home?" he inquired, sadly.

"Oh, well—let me see—home is—well—ah—pretty much what one makes it; or more properly speaking, what a woman makes it. Get some good woman, Arbuckle—a woman with the makings of a home in her, not a—a—fashionable fiddle-de-dee. One who will take care of you, and make you forget all the bits that ought to be forgotten. Let me introduce you to one or two most lovable young ladies whom I have in my mind's eye just now."

"Better not, Doctor. Thank you, all the same. I had made my choice, and was as happy as man can be for a time—the sort of thing that cannot be repeated in this world. But she threw me up," explained the younger man quietly.

"What for?—may I ask, without offence?"

"Hetty Tranent told her of my misfortune, and she thought we had better make an end of it," said Arbuckle.

"Then, believe me," burst out the Doctor, "that if that woman told her that, she told her plenty more besides which was not true. Or—if not—the lady of your choice was not worthy of your regard."

"Oh, yes, she was. It has made no difference to me. I cannot blame her."

"Humph!" was the dissatisfied response.

"So I am willing to stay here or go, whichever you like, Doctor. I am aimless, bound for nowhere. If you like to anchor me here, well and good. I shall at least do my duty every time."

"God be praised! I must go at once and tell Mrs Macintosh. I'll be allowed to go and sleep in peace to-night, for the curtain-lectures I've had to listen to all this spring, urging me to get you to consent to stay with us, have been—well—. However, now she'll be delighted. There's the surgery bell, shall you go, or shall I? Stay!" glancing at Arbuckle's listless face, "perhaps I had better go myself. Then that's all settled?"

"As you please, Doctor," was the reply, and the delighted gentleman, rubbing his palms together as was his wont when pleased, left the apartment.

The sun was setting slowly in the west when the Doctor came back, after an absence of a full hour and a half. Dr Arbuckle was still sitting in the chair by the window where he had left him, and at sight of him he began again to rub his palms together with an impression of enjoyment, his benevolent face beaming.

"Well, Arbuckle, I've had it out with my wife, and

whether she kissed me or no is none of your business. Suffice it, that the curtain-lectures, on this point at least, are ended happily. Eh—by the way, I may say—in fact, I know you will quite agree with me, that Mrs Macintosh is a lady whose opinion on most points is of considerable value.”

Dr Arbuckle bowed a sincere assent.

“Well, I have been talking this thing—this *affaire de cœur* of yours over with her, and she avows, is perfectly certain indeed, that Hetty Tranent must have lied to—to—ah—the lady you were engaged to.”

“Unfortunately, she told her the truth,” responded Arbuckle.

“No, she didn’t!” returned the Doctor, emphatically. “Eh, that is, Mrs Macintosh is perfectly sure she didn’t; but thinks she has told her some outrageous story of your being in love with her, and—eh—you were in the habit of going to visit Hetty occasionally, weren’t you?”

“Oh, of course I did; she was quite a society woman, you know, and I also went professionally,” Arbuckle admitted, wearily.

“Yes, exactly. Well, don’t you see how easy it was for an unscrupulous woman who was crazy to get you herself to put two and two together, and so deceive an unsophisticated young lady.”

“No, no, Doctor, she knew better than that. She knew that was impossible, impossible.”

“Oh, yes, from your point of view,” persisted the Doctor.

“Then this Hetty had a boy—Freddie.”

Dr Arbuckle suddenly started, and with some of his old alertness flashed a look into the Doctor’s face.

"How do you know that?" he demanded.

"Why—ahem—" coughed the Doctor, in some confusion. "I suppose you must have told me yourself—of course, you must have."

"Well, about Freddie, poor lad?" inquired Arbuckle, with a pensive smile of reminiscence.

The Doctor put his hand to his forehead for a moment and tried to recollect.

"Upon my soul, Arbuckle, this boy—I really forget what I was going to suggest about him. However, here is what I want to get at. I want you to disabuse your mind of the idea of the young lady Miss Wyngate—"

"Dr Macintosh!" exclaimed the younger man, rising to his feet, "how have you got that name? Have you written? Have you been in communication with—"

"No, no! Write? No! but let me see," pursued the Doctor, in fresh confusion. "Why, you look as if I had turned an electric battery upon you. Eh—well—sit down till I deliver Mrs Macintosh's message. She says—you aren't to believe the young lady threw you up on account of that old misfortune. It must have been some of Hetty's lies about being tied to or entangled with herself somehow that has caused the separation. You were thrown into the fire of suspicion and slander, like two nuts at Hallowe'en, and instead of taking time and drawing closer, and glowing together to the end, it was puff! pop! and apart you flew without any more questions asked. Wasn't it, now?" interrogated the Doctor, veil his eagerness with a show of humour.

Dr Arbuckle made no reply. He was standing looking out to where the reflection of the sunset was flushing the purple bank of clouds away down beyond Holyrood, and

he did not notice the anxious look with which his friend stood nervously regarding him.

"If such a thing could be possible—if—" was the thought formulating in his mind, and beginning to stir with awakening regret.

"Promise me one thing," urged the Doctor, kindly, with an inner glow in his dark eye.

"Say that you will take this view of the matter into your consideration—take it for granted, as it were, and put yourself in the young lady's place—eh—ahem!"

Arbuckle turned slowly from the window and smiled at the Doctor's eagerness.

"I will, Doctor, thank you, you are very kind. But such a supposition is too good to be true."

"Not at all—while there's life there's hope; and, by the way, it's nigh on the dinner hour."

When Dr Arbuckle met Mrs Macintosh in the dining-room, she seized his hand in her gentle old palm, and, bestowing on him a bright, sympathetic smile—whispered—

"I'm so glad you will stay. Cheer up! there's a good time coming."

But for all this kind sympathy and cheer he ate but little. A new idea had begun to revolve in his mind; the old pain and the new hope which had been suggested by the Doctor's words had both awakened; he dreaded to admit, to encourage the hope; the old hopeless pain had become unendurable.

Immediately after dinner he rose and returned to the little room he had left, and again in the dim twilight took his seat by the window. For a long time he sat motionless, watching the golden fingertips of the moon clinging

to a grey wall of cloud as she pulled herself slowly up out of the sea. But as thoughts and memories crowded upon him he began to get restive. The possibility, the probability as it seemed now, that he might have wronged her in thought, that she might after all have been deceived, appeared more and more likely. The woman who had been capable of swearing his life away in a wild and desperate impulse, was certainly as capable of destroying him in the eyes of the innocent and unsuspecting woman he loved. The thought of it stirred up all the smouldering fire within him. The lethargy which he could not, had never tried to shake off, was consumed by it; his slumbering force and energy stirred and woke and prompted as of old to action.

"Just go in, my dear, don't be afraid," he heard the kindly voice of Mrs Macintosh say outside the door which stood ajar, evidently speaking to some one hesitating to enter the surgery opposite. But he remembered the old Doctor was in the surgery, so he sat still and thought on—

"If it could be possible; if it could be—that life could be life once more; a blessed reality, not a mere memory—ah!—"

Unable to sit any longer, he rose, and in the turmoil of his thoughts turned to pace the floor, when he suddenly started and stepped back a pace. For there, in the middle of the room stood a shadowy figure, with pale sweet face and lambent eyes showing mystically in the faint light of the rising moon.

"Natalie!" fell from his lips unconsciously, and opening his arms she glided into them, and life was life once more.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AND LOVE IS LIBERAL AS THE SUMMER AIR.

DR Macintosh, as we have seen, was no diplomat. As a manœuvrist he was a failure, and in trying to break the news of Natalie's arrival at the house by suggesting and insisting on the possibility of mistake or misunderstanding, he had almost let the cat out of the bag. It was Natalie who was waiting when he had answered the surgery bell that afternoon, and no sooner did she introduce herself and explain that she was from Canada, and that her errand was to see Dr Arbuckle, than he at once took her into Mrs Macintosh's little private parlour.

"A lady," was the mutual comment each mentally took of the other as they shook hands. Touched by the kindness, the almost parental tenderness, with which the Doctor and his wife spoke of Edward Arbuckle, Natalie soon thawed out of her natural reserve, and in order to justify him still more in their eyes, told them all the history of their acquaintance from the first. When she explained how Dr Bruno's speculative mania had brought about the catastrophe of her mother's death and her own subsequent illness, tears more than once filled the eyes of Mrs Macintosh. But when she described how Hetty Tranent had lied to her and deceived her, the Doctor could not keep still, but went pacing up and down the room, snorting like an angry lion.

"That woman was a fiend, a perfect fiend. I'm sorry I advised my brother to let her go—she ought to have been jailed," he protested; but Natalie said—

"No, oh, no, Doctor! Indeed, she was not all bad. When she learned how I nursed poor Freddie and caught the infection from him, she called at the hospital every day, and as soon as I was better came and confessed all to me. It must have been very hard on her, for she gave her entire reputation into my hands without any condition; and, being a society woman, that argued some latent nobility in her, I think."

Mrs Macintosh quite agreed with Natalie, but the Doctor only responded with a slightly modified "Humph!"

Then she explained how, after she knew how cruelly she had been deceived; when she realised that *he* must have believed that it was on account of his dreadful misfortune she had forsaken him; how, understanding now that broken-hearted farewell which she had so misconstrued, a long relapse of her illness followed, and again she hovered between life and death, only saved by superior skill, and the perfect nursing of Miss Stobie. She told them how the days were ages until she was sufficiently recovered to travel and come hither to beg his forgiveness and his love; and when, no longer able to keep back the tears, she at last gave way, she found herself in the embrace of soft, motherly arms, and Mrs Macintosh's voice consoling her with words of hope and cheer.

"For he is one of the family now, my dear; it was all settled this very day. He will be a son to us—we have none of our own; he will be a partner now, and ultimately succeed to my husband's practice. You musn't coax him away; you must stay too. But, my dear," she continued, turning to the Doctor, who, with his back to them, stood fumbling his watch seals as he stared out into the garden, "this will have to be broken to the young

man gently. Think of all the poor fellow has had to bear. Do your best to manage it gently, Andrew."

"Ahem! yes, we must be careful," assented the Doctor. "Supposing I say we got a letter—"

"No, that won't do, besides, it isn't true; there's no use telling a lie about it."

"Well, then, I will tell him that the lady is under our roof."

"Andrew, do you want to kill the poor man?"

"Or that she will be here shortly."

"Nonsense! Don't you see he will at once suspect something. How are you supposed to know anything of Miss Wyngate's movements?"

"True—very true."

"What you must do is to prepare his mind for this."

"But Mrs Macintosh—how? Just you state *how*, my dear, and I will endeavour, to the best of my ability, to follow your instructions."

"What I mean is—to suggest that it may have been all a cruel misunderstanding, as it really was—that—oh, dear me, Andrew!—surely you have gumption enough to manage a little business like that." And with a playful pat on the shoulder she dismissed the Doctor, and sent him on his diplomatic errand. And on the whole, the performance was not without its merits, or, as we have seen, without result.

It needed little persuasion to induce Natalie to become a daughter to the elderly couple. "Thy people shall be my people," she said to him a couple of days afterwards as together they sat on Arthur's Seat looking down on the beautiful city.

"Are you not afraid to marry a man with such an awful secret in his past?" he asked her.

"Misfortune is no sin, Edward. We are all of us, more or less, the creatures of circumstance and environment."

"Yes—and this is what appals me. It is part of the infinite mystery and burden of life."

"Do not speak of it, dear; do not think of it. Surely we have had enough of it. Let us be happy a while now."

"No, I will not refer to it after this. But all the same, there are times when my whole nature rises up in rebellion against this cross which I am compelled to bear. There are times when I feel that in my blindness I could rise like Samson and shake the pillars of the world down upon myself, and the Fates which forever mock me with a deed which my whole nature revolts from."

"Oh, beloved! can I not comfort you?" pleaded the true woman, with appealing eyes.

"Yes, my darling; I thankfully accept the compensation God has given me. Alone, I feel I must have sunk under it. Now—"

They were sitting on the brow of the hill, with the warm spring sunshine gladdening all about them, in full view of the fair city spread out beneath, in view also of other men and women strolling over the hill, but Edward Arbuckle cared not who saw him; he was too full, too thankful for the new life and hope she had brought him, to consider anything else, and he finished his sentence by drawing her head down upon his breast, his lips touching her brow.

"I confess, my dear," said Mrs Macintosh to Natalie

later on ; "I confess I have a liking for the old-fashioned weddings, with flowers and bridesmaids and all the smiling, happy paraphernalia; but since you both prefer a quiet bridal, with only my husband and myself as witnesses, why," she laughed, "I can only say, 'Barkis is willin'.' Only, my dear, I really must have a reception afterward, a wedding reception, in order to introduce you properly to all our friends, you know."

Mrs Macintosh took good care that this reception was made as magnificent as any wedding.

Natalie felt she could not interfere, for Mrs Macintosh was determined that the daughter of Colonel Wyngate should be introduced to Edinburgh society as Mrs Arbuckle in a manner which would at once establish her position.

The young couple smiled and consented. What was society to them? or the world for that matter? Were they not a world to themselves? Nevertheless, while in Rome, be as the Romans.

Mrs Mackintosh was a woman wise in her generation—let be!

CHAPTER XXV.

DELIVERANCE.

“OH, mamma, come quick, here’s a tab at our door,” cried little George Arbuckle, as he stood at the parlour window, looking down into the street.

“Some of papa’s patient’s, dear,” replied his mother.

“But it’s a lady, mamma, and she has a big, big trunk like a house. Look.”

Mrs Arbuckle, to please the child, did come over and look down, but she was too late to see the lady, who had ascended the front steps, and was now waiting the opening of the door in answer to the bell.

“Dear me! who can be coming here, my boy? Perhaps some one to see Gran’ma Macintosh;” and in some wonder she watched the man bearing upon his back the trunks into the house. With still greater wonder she saw her husband run down the steps and pay the cabman—in his pleasurable excitement turning and bounding back up the steps, two at a time.

“Joy never kills—does it, dear?” he cried, bursting into the apartment suddenly, with his strong face aglow, a much younger looking man than when we saw him last on the eve of his wedding-day.

“Why, Edward, what is it? Who is the lady?” asked Natalie, in some surprise.

“Can’t you guess?” asked the Doctor.

A cloud dimmed the sweetness of his wife’s face, as she answered—

“Not—not her, Edward?”

A sudden frown, a shake of the head in impatient protest, and then the Doctor laughed and turned to the door and called—

“Come in, Miss Stobie!”—and after the manner of women the two friends fell upon each other’s neck, and kissed repeatedly.

“What a delightful surprise! Why didn’t you let us know you were coming?”

“I wanted to surprise you. I wanted to get away as quickly as possible, and now I am going to quarter myself on you for six weeks. My first holiday in as many years.”

Natalie looked at her friend, and the tears filled her soft eyes. In these years of arduous work Miss Stobie had aged considerably. Her hair was almost white, and she looked worn and in need of rest.

“Oh, I am so glad to see you again; it is so good to see your dear, kind face after all these long years,” murmured the Doctor’s wife.

“Happy years, surely, Natalie,” said her husband.

“Happy! oh, yes!—look,” she said, lifting the flaxen curled four-year-old off the chair, from which he had been silently contemplating this scene. “Here is our boy; isn’t he a darling?”

Miss Stobie took the child upon her knee, and looked at him, critically.

“He is like you, Natalie, although he is so fair. He has your brow and eyes.”

“Thank God for that!” exclaimed his father, gravely.

“Why, Doctor? wouldn’t you like him to be like yourself just as well?” asked Miss Stobie gaily; her old,

bright hopefulness reminding the couple strongly of those bygone days of endeavour in Toronto Hospital.

"No," he said sadly, "what is best—in this case." And so saying he excused himself and returned to the patients awaiting him in the surgery.

Natalie also grew a trifle graver, but an introspective smile lingered on Miss Stobie's lips as she looked at the child.

"My husband is afraid, you know. He thinks so much of heredity—too much, I think," Natalie explained, but Miss Stobie laughed almost gleefully as she hugged and kissed the wondering child.

"No danger, Georgie boy; you are all right. If you be as good a man as your father you'll do—won't you?"

Georgie nodded his curly head in assent, but his father did not smile.

It was as Natalie had indicated, Dr Arbuckle's joy over the birth of his son had been clouded by a certain apprehension, a reflex of the gloom which had darkened his own life.

In the evening, after they had bidden Dr and Mrs Macintosh good-night, and the three were sitting around the parlour fire talking of old times and Toronto, Miss Stobie, with most unaccountable flippancy, began to rally the Doctor on this, what she called, "ridiculous and groundless dread."

"You are certainly a strong and absolute believer in heredity I must say," she said, looking at him with eyes that shone strangely.

"I am," was the short and decisive answer.

"Well, my friend, I am very glad to know that you are so—very glad indeed. Allow me to congratulate you

on your opinions, which are so entirely my own. I think if this doctrine of heredity were sufficiently preached to people who are about to marry they would order their thoughts, feelings, walk, and conversation in such a way as to benefit the coming generation instead of blasting it with every form of self-indulgence as they too often do. Their motto would be that of the great German—‘Come, let us live for our children.’”

The serio-comic air with which this was said, the strange, quizzical mirth which danced in the eyes of the speaker, utterly bewildered her host and hostess. It slightly surprised and irritated Dr Arbuckle—Miss Stobie was becoming a disappointment to him; he had been mistaken in her—he had always considered her a woman of great delicacy of feeling; now she was actually trenching upon good manners by sarcastically alluding to his misfortune. As for Natalie, though slightly hurt, she excused her friend by supposing that it was a well-meant effort to rally her husband out of an idea which was becoming settled in his mind; but she wished Miss Stobie had spoken to herself in private rather than thus to him. She could not bear that these two, her husband and her old friend, should suffer in each other's estimation; so, uncertain what to reply to this unexpected deliverance, she sat without response. Dr Arbuckle stared hard at the fire. Miss Stobie laughed again.

“Gloomy subject, eh? Oh, well, forgive me this time; I suppose it's your belief in heredity which makes me so hilarious this evening. Do you, too, believe in heredity, Natalie?”

“O, well—of course to a certain extent I do. But I can't believe that children are always an exact reproduc-

tion of their parents," replied Natalie, vexed that her friend would harp on this painful subject.

"Well, I hope that little George Macintosh Arbuckle will turn out to be a faithful counterpart of my friend, your husband here—in everything."

Natalie suddenly paled as she glanced at her husband, who, with compressed lips and temples across which the veins stood out like whip-cords, lay back mutely in his chair.

"Let us change the subject, Miss Stobie, dear. Tell us some of your experiences since I left," she said, gently.

"The very thing I was about to suggest," returned the lady cheerfully, and with no sign of compunction for hurt feelings. "Here is the confession of a patient, a woman who died of consumption the week before I left. I took it down in writing, with an eye to you two. If I don't enlighten you on this dark subject of heredity on which you brood—"

"Miss Stobie!" cried Natalie, in pain, "pray don't speak of it any more."

Dr Arbuckle's brows were closely knit, and he sat mute and stern. She was his guest and their old friend; she must be tolerated—but—heavens! how had he ever come to think so highly of such a woman?

"This woman," continued Miss Stobie—heedless of either exclamation or expression—"had been in the hospital for some time; we knew it could not be for long, it was not worth while shifting her to the Incurables. A few days before she died, feeling her end drawing nigh, she sent for me and made this confession—

"I, Hester Reid, widow of the late Alexander Reid, knowing that I must shortly appear before God, do

hereby confess what I know, but have hidden hitherto, regarding the murder of one—Ramsay, who was found dead in his bed, in the Royal Arms Hotel, Clydeshire, Scotland, supposed to have been done to death by a somnambulist.”

A cry burst from the lips of the Doctor's wife—she sprang into her husband's lap, and with a wailing sob, wound her arms about him. The Doctor grimly suffered her for one moment, then freeing himself, he set her in the chair, and sternly facing Miss Stobie with ashy countenance, said hoarsely—

“Madam, if this is what you have come for, if you have come to add a new horror to my unfortunate past—”

His speech was suddenly stopped, and his mouth closed by the elderly nurse starting up and throwing her arms about him, hugging him like a bear.

“For Heaven's sake!” he began; but she laid her white, shapely hand upon his mouth and would not suffer him to speak.

“Oh, my dears, my dears! Have I not crossed the Atlantic to have the bliss of bearing the good news to you? It was all a mistake! All the monster of Mrs Tranent's imagination! It was not you at all—it was Alexander Reid who murdered your poor friend.”

The Doctor staggered back out of her arms like a man stricken dumb.

“Is this really true?” he gasped, “are you sure there is no mistake this time?”

“No mistake,” wiping her own eyes which had overflowed with sympathy. “You have been labouring under a delusion, it was a dream—you had been led to believe, a dreadful dream—come—let me convince you.”

They all sat down again, Natalie holding her husband's hand fast in both of hers, and Miss Stobie resumed reading the confession.

“ My husband, who was not a bad man when I married him, only weak, being unable to refrain from drink, had lost his situation some six months before this event, and had been unable to get another for want of a good character to recommend him. We were in great poverty, and I was under the necessity of doing laundry work in order to make a living for us and for our one little girl. Mr Arbuckle's laundrying was sent to me with others. When he called to pay me one day he got into conversation with my husband, and hearing of his misfortunes, offered him a suit of clothes which he thought would fit him, they being both about one size. He got the clothes, and trying them on, laid them aside until, as he said, he could get away. He had a notion that if he could get away he could yet do well, away where nobody knew him. One morning he got up early, and sauntering about he saw young Arbuckle get out of the French window of the hotel, taking his valise with him. He passed and said good-morning to him, when suddenly Arbuckle turned and said—” ‘ I say, Reid, I wish you would slip up and shut that French window. I forgot to close it behind me.’

“ My husband did so, but as he looked into the open window a horrible temptation laid hold of him. In the middle of the apartment he saw Ramsay's trousers lying across a chair, and his pocket-book on the coat above them. He thought if he could but get that pocket-book he might get enough in it to take him away where he could get work and comfort once more, and he stepped

in, and with his back to the bed, was in the act of abstracting the pocket-book when his arm was clutched from behind, and Ramsay's voice called pleasantly—

“ ‘I say, Arbuckle what are you after?’ ”

“ My husband, in a sudden fit of terror, turned, and throwing himself upon Ramsay, who was a delicate fellow, seized him by the throat to prevent his giving the alarm. He was a man of immense strength, and was not aware, he said, of the awful force he was exerting until the unfortunate man suddenly lay quite still—dead. Then, overcome with horror, but hoping he might yet come to, he placed the pocket book as he had found it, and quietly stepping out of the window he closed it softly, and crept home and went to bed. I never knew he had been out until the day after Ramsay was buried—supposed to have been killed by young Arbuckle in his sleep. Arbuckle had done a most heroic deed just the day previous, having destroyed a mad dog, and a doctor who was then residing in the town said it must have been the brain repeating the strong nervous action of the proceeding day. This theory was borne out by the barmaid, who swore that the two young men were the best of friends, and that Arbuckle had made no secret of his departure. Detectives were nevertheless put upon his track, but all further search was abandoned when a body was found—the face quite unrecognisable—but the body clothed in young Arbuckle's garments and a couple of letters, receipts for purchases made by him, found in the pockets. That completely established the identity of the body in the opinion of the authorities, but I knew it was the body of my husband. He had never known sleep since that morning, and when young Ramsay was buried

he confessed to me what he had done, and went away. Whether it was an accident or suicide I never knew. I only know he repented bitterly of his unpremeditated crime. I trust he may have found mercy. The neighbours never missed him, for he had told them he was going away to look for work, and when they saw my trouble they laid it to my anxiety, knowing his unsteady habits. But I could not stay in the place, and I managed to get away too, and by the sale of my furniture and some help, came over to Canada with my little girl, who died shortly after my arrival. It has been a great burden on my mind the knowledge of this secret, and had any one been blamed for it I should certainly have come forward at once and told the truth; but, as no one has, I have kept silence. I could not bear to be considered the wife of a murderer unless compelled to. Having confessed all now, I can die easier; and on my deathbed, with eternity in view, I swear this to be the truth about the death of young Ramsay.

(Signed) "HESTER REID.

Witnessed by { "HELENA ALICE STOBIE, H.N.,
"KATHERINE WATSON, Nurse,
General Hospital, Toronto."

"Dear, dear, old friend faithful and true!" sobbed Natalie, sinking at the nurse's feet, and burying her face in her lap as of old.

Dr Arbuckle, when Miss Stobie ceased reading, rose and walked out of the room. The two women had remained in silence a while, and then Natalie looking up missed her husband, and started up—

"I must go to him, dear. Oh! you don't know; you

cannot conceive what this means to us. He has got so afraid of late—for—for the boy."

She found her husband had lain down upon the bed in their room, and had taken the child into his arms, holding him fast.

She laid her hand on his shoulder, gently.

"Edward—dear—oh, my husband—thank God! oh, thank God!" and she bent her cheek down close to his, and kissed him and the child.

"Yes, my wife, 'The Lord has turned again the captivity of Job.'"

CHAPTER XXVI.

AFTERGLOW.

BUT who shall describe the joy, the dismay of old Dr Macintosh! Joy that his favourite adopted son had at last been freed from such a life-long nightmare; dismay that his theory had after all been entirely wrong. It was humbling; it made him quarrelsome, and he pounced upon Hetty Tranent as the sole cause of the mistake. She must have invented the whole scene as she described it to Dr Arbuckle, he maintained. But Arbuckle strenuously defended Hetty. She had seen and heard enough to excite suspicion; probably, he might in his sleep, have thrown himself across Ramsay, and he have shaken him off. That was all she could have seen. The rest her imagination had conjured up, inspired by the horror of the morning's discovery. But that she was entirely sincere in her belief there could be no manner of doubt. Dr Macintosh had no patience with him.

"As sincere as she was when she came and denounced you as a wilful—"

"George, my dear!" expostulated his wife, whose interest in the matter was as great as his own, only she had no theories upset, therefore could be calm.

"By the way, Miss Stobie, did you ever see or hear anything of Dr Bruno after I left?" inquired Mrs Arbuckle, dexterously changing the subject.

"Oh, yes, frequently. The Doctor, you know, sold out his interest and agency in the Eureka Mina at a fair

profit; realised indeed quite a nice sum by the transaction. He also sold the purchaser of the agency, the mine having given out."

"The purchaser might have known that when rats abandon a ship it is all over," growled the old Doctor.

"He sued Dr Bruno," continued the nurse, "but it was proven to be a genuine and proper transfer, with the consent of both parties, so the purchaser could only grin and bear it, and pay costs of prosecution in addition. However, he was at liberty to form his own opinions, which to a large extent were those of the initiated public. Dr Bruno thereafter sold out the academy to a lady in whose hands it is prospering finely; and the Doctor opened another of the same in San Francisco with quite a number of young lady pupils."

"But, dear me! Miss Stobie, I understood this person Bruno was a widower when Natalie left. Has he any sister who acts as matron?" asked Mrs Macintosh, with some anxiety.

"Oh! he took a wife with him," explained the nurse.

"Dr Bruno married again!" exclaimed Natalie.

"Yes, married again!" echoed Miss Stobie, dryly.

"And poor Mrs Tranent?" continued Mrs Arbuckle.

"I always feel sorry for her."

"Well, you needn't. There is no longer any such person."

"Oh, Miss Stobie! not dead, surely!" cried Mrs Arbuckle, and her husband, smitten with compunction, also uttered a regretful exclamation. Miss Stobie laughed.

"Dead? not she! She is 'Dr Bruno's Wife.'"

